

**Nahdlatul Ulama
and the
Struggle for Power
within Islam
and Politics in
Indonesia**



ROBIN BUSH

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Nahdlatul Ulama and the Struggle for Power within Islam and Politics in Indonesia

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*Dedicated to the memory of
Daniel S. Lev, with much love and gratitude*

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Robin Bush
10 May 2008

Glossary

<i>abangan</i> Muslims	nominal or less strict Muslims, usually in reference to Javanese Muslims
<i>ahlusunnah wal jamaah</i>	‘those who follow the Sunnah’; long-hand term for the majority Sunni branch within Islam; in Indonesia, it refers to those who follow any of the four <i>mazhab</i> , and is used by traditionalist Muslims to differentiate themselves from modernist Muslims
<i>aliran</i>	‘stream’; also used to denote the variation between types of Islam in Indonesia
Al-Irsyad	Jami’yyat al-Islah wal-Irsyad (Union for Reformation and Guidance)
<i>amar ma’ruf nahi munkar</i>	doing good and avoiding evil
Ansor	the young men’s branch of NU
<i>assalamu’alaikum</i>	‘peace be upon you’ (an Islamic greeting)
Bakorstanas	Badan Koordinasi Stabilitas Nasional (Coordinating Agency for the Maintenance of National Stability)
Banser	the paramilitary wing of Ansor
<i>bid’ah</i>	innovation (usually holds a negative connotation)
BPPN	Badan Penyehatan Perbankan Nasional (National Banking Rehabilitation Agency)
Bulog	Badan Urusan Logistik (National Logistics Agency)
Darul Islam	a pro-Islamic-state, secessionist movement that rebelled against the Indonesian government in 1948–62
DDII	Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (Islamic Education Council of Indonesia); founded in 1967

DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (People's Representative Council); the lower house of parliament
ELSAD	Lembaga Studi Agama dan Demokrasi (Institute for the Study of Religion and Democracy)
Fatayat NU	NU Younger Women's Organization
<i>fatwa</i>	religious edict or opinion
<i>fiqh</i>	jurisprudence, legal prescriptions
FKI	Forum Kerja Indonesia (Indonesian Working Forum); founded in 1998
FUKOHA	Forum Ulama Untuk Optimalisasi Hak Atas Anggaran (Forum of Ulama to Optimize Budget Rights)
GMNU	Generasi Muda Nahdlatul Ulama (Young Generation of NU)
Golkar	Golongan Karya (the state political party under the New Order, and one of the major post-New Order parties)
GPI	Gerakan Pemuda Islam (Islamic Youth Movement)
Guided Democracy	the Soekarno regime, 1959–66
Gus Dur	Abdurrahman Wahid
Haji	title used by a male who has performed the <i>hajj</i>
Hadith	report or account of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad transmitted through a chain of narrators; Hadith are a basic source for Islamic law (see also Sunnah)
<i>hajj</i>	the annual pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>halal</i>	'released' (from prohibition); term denoting what is permitted or lawful in Islam
<i>haram</i>	'forbidden'; term for actions or things that are prohibited by Islamic law
Hijaz	a coastal region of the western Arabian Peninsula bordering the Red Sea, and including both Mecca and Medina; it was

	an independent kingdom until it united with Nejd to form the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
HMI	Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Islamic Students Association); founded in 1947
IAIN	Institut Agama Islam Negeri (State Islamic Institute); provides tertiary-level degrees
<i>ibadah</i>	worship, prescribed ritual duty
IBRA	Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency (also known as BPPN)
ICIP	International Centre for Islam and Pluralism; founded in 2003
ICIS	International Conference of Islamic Scholars
ICMI	Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals); founded in 1990
<i>ijtihad</i>	independent judgement, based on recognized sources of Islam, on a legal or theological question (in contrast to <i>taqlid</i> , judgment based on tradition or convention)
<i>ijma'</i>	consensus of expert legal opinion
IPKI	Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Pro-Independence Alliance of Indonesia)
IPNU	Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama (Union of NU Students); a group for secondary school boys
IPPNU	Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama (Union of NU Girl Students); a group for secondary school girls
ISIS	Institut untuk Studi Institusi Sosial (Institute for Social Institutions Studies)
<i>jahiliyah</i>	'ignorance of Islam'; historically it refers to the period before the revelation of Islam and its spread by the Prophet Muhammad
JIL	Jaringan Islam Liberal (Liberal Islam Network); founded in 2001

JPPR	Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih untuk Rakyat (People's Voter Education Network); founded in 1998
Ka'bah	the 'House of God'; a cube-like building situated in the Grand Mosque of Mecca
Kembali ke Khittah 1926	Return to the Guidelines of 1926
Kepercayaan	'Belief'; the official title for a set of mystically oriented belief systems indigenous to Indonesia
<i>ketua</i>	director or deputy chair
<i>ketua umum</i>	chair (the head of the Tanfidziyah)
KH	Kiai Haji (see <i>kiai</i> , Haji)
<i>khilafiyah</i>	contentious legal matter on which the opinion of the <i>ulama</i> is divided
<i>khittah</i>	guidelines, basis
Khittah '26	see Kembali ke Khittah 1926
<i>kiai</i>	'noble', 'lofty'; title of a religious scholar or leader
KISDI	Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam (Indonesian Committee for World Islamic Solidarity); formed in 1986 to promote the cause of overseas Muslims in conflict zones
<i>kitab kuning</i>	'yellow books' (a reference to the colour of the pages); commentaries on the Qur'an and Islamic law used as teaching texts in <i>pesantren</i>
KMNU	Kaum Muda Nahdlatul Ulama (Young Generation of NU)
Konstituante	Constituent Assembly; elected body that met between December 1956 and June 1959 to draft a permanent constitution to replace the existing provisional constitution
KOPRI	Korps Putri (the women's branch of PMII)
KPU	Komite Pemilihan Umum (National Election Commission)
Lajnah Bahtsul Matsail	Committee for Religious Problem Solving
Lajnah Falakiyah	Committee of Astrology

Lakpesdam	Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (Institute for the Study and Development of Human Resources), founded in 1985
Liga Muslimin	League of Muslims, established by NU in August 1952 in an effort to provide an organizational alternative to Masyumi for Muslim groups in Indonesia
LIPI	Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Sciences)
LKB	Lembaga Kajian Bangsa (Institute of National Studies)
LKiS	Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Social (Institute for the Study of Islam and Society); founded in 1993
LKKNU	Lembaga Kemaslahatan Keluarga Nahdlatul Ulama (NU Family Welfare Institute)
LKPSM	Lajinah Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (the Yogyakarta-based branch of Lakpesdam)
LP2NU	Lembaga Pengembangan Pertanian Nahdlatul Ulama (NU Agricultural Development Institute)
LP3ES	Lembaga Penelitian Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial (Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information); founded in 1971
LPBH	Lembaga Penyuluhan dan Bantuan Hukum (Institute for Legal Training and Aid)
Ma'arif NU <i>madrasah</i>	Ma'arif NU Institute of Education Islamic day school, often located on the grounds of a <i>pesantren</i> ; since 1989 <i>madrasah</i> have been required to teach the national education curriculum
MAR	Majelis Amanat Rakyat (People's Mandate Council); founded in 1998

Masyumi	Madjlis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims); originally a Japanese-sponsored Islamic organization formed in 1943, it transformed itself into an Islamic party in 1945 and was banned by Soekarno in 1960
<i>mazhab</i>	the four schools of Sunni Islam (Syafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali)
MDI	Majelis Dakwah Islamiyah (Muslim Education Council)
MAI	Majelis Islam A'laa Indonesia (Supreme Council of Indonesian Muslims); formed in September 1937
MPR	Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People's Consultative Assembly); the upper house of parliament
Muhammadiyah	modernist Islamic organization founded in 1912
MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Ulama); founded in 1975
Muktamar	National Congress of NU, held every five years
Munas	Musyawarah Nasional Alim Ulama (National Meeting of Ulama); NU's mid-term conference
Murba	Partai Musyawarah Rakyat Banyak (Party of the Masses); founded by Adam Malik in 1948
Muslimat NU	NU Women's Organization; founded in 1946
Mustasyar	Advisory Council (of NU)
New Order	the Suharto era, 1965–98
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of the Religious Scholars); Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, founded in 1926 by Hasyim Asy'ari and Wahab Chasbullah to promote traditionalist Islam
NUM	Nahdlatul Ummat (Awakening of Muslim Believers)

P3M	Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (Association for the Development of Pesantren and Society); founded 1983
P-4	Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila (an indoctrination course on Pancasila)
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party); founded in 1998
Pancasila	the 'Five Principles' constituting the national ideology of the Indonesian state; they are: belief in Almighty God, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy through consultation and consensus, and social justice
Paramadina	a neo-modernist NGO founded in 1986
Parkindo	Partai Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Party)
Parmusi	Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Party)
Partai Bintang Sembilan	Nine Star Party
Partai Katolik	Catholic Party
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Moon and Star Party); founded in 1998
PBNU	Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama (Executive Board of NU)
PCNU	Pengurus Cabang Nahdlatul Ulama (District Board of NU)
PBS	Partai Bintang Sembilan (Nine Star Party)
PDI	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesian Democratic Party); founded in 1973 by President Soeharto by merging five existing parties
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle); founded in 1998
Persis	Persatuan Islam (Islamic Association); reformist Islamic organization founded in 1923

Perti	Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Islamic Education Association); Sumatra-based traditionalist organization and political party founded in 1930
<i>pesantren</i>	'place of the <i>santri</i> '; traditional Islamic boarding school
PIR	Persatuan Indonesia Raya (Greater United Party)
PK	Partai Keadilan (Justice Party); formed in 1998 and renamed Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) in 2003
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party); founded in 1998, and based largely on an NU constituency
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKU	Partai Kebangkitan Umat (Muslim Community Awakening Party)
PMII	Perikatan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Students Association)
PNI	Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party)
PNU	Partai Nahdlatul Umat (Rise of the Muslim Community Party)
Poros Tengah	Central Axis
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party); established under regime pressure in 1973 by amalgamating four Islamic parties: NU, Parmusi (the successor to Masyumi), Perti and Sarekat Islam
<i>priyayi</i>	the traditional aristocratic class of Java
PRRI	Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia)
PSII	Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Union Party); an offshoot of Sarekat Islam

PUI	Partai Umat Islam (Muslim Believers Party)
PWNU	Pengurus Wilayah Nahdlatul Ulama (Provincial Board of NU)
Qur'an	God's word as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and the supreme source of absolute authority for Islam
<i>rais am</i>	president general (the head of the Syuri'ah)
Ramadan	ninth month of the Islamic calendar during which fasting is required
<i>reformasi</i>	'reform'; the post-New order period
RMI	Rabitah Ma'ahid al-Islamiyah (Pesantren Institute)
<i>salafiyah</i>	term for those who seek to emulate the practice of the first few generations of the Muslim community, who are seen as providing an exemplary model of proper Islamic thinking and behaviour
<i>santri</i>	student (in a <i>pesantren</i>)
<i>santri</i> Muslims	pious Muslims who seek to adhere strictly to the ritual and legal requirements of Islam
Sarekat Islam	Islamic Association; founded in 1912
sharia	Islamic law
Shi'a, Shi'ism	'faction', 'party'; the second largest branch of Islam after Sunni
Sufism	Islamic mysticism
SUNI	Solidaritas Uni Nasional Indonesia (Solidarity of the National Union of Indonesia)
Sunnah	'custom', 'usage'; established custom and normative precedent in Islam based on the example of the Prophet Muhammad; collection of the records and memories of the behaviour, thoughts and actions of the Prophet
Sunni	the majority branch of Islam (see <i>ahlusunnah wal jamaah</i>)

Syafi'i	one of the four <i>mazhab</i> of Sunni Islam, and the dominant school of Indonesia's traditionalist Muslims
Syuriah	Supreme Council (of NU)
<i>tahlil/tahlilan</i>	<i>tahlil</i> refers to the repetition of the phrase <i>la ilaaha illa 'llah</i> (there is no god but God); <i>tahlilan</i> refers to the ritual of community members gathering to pray for the soul of someone who has died
Tanfidziyah	Administrative Council (of NU)
<i>taqlid</i>	judgment based on tradition or convention; reliance on the legal interpretations of the <i>ulama</i> , contained within the four main <i>mazhab</i> of the classical era
<i>ulama</i>	'learned'; Islamic scholar(s)
<i>umat</i>	the Islamic community
<i>umat</i> Islam	the unified body of Muslim believers
Wahhabism	Saudi-based religious purification and social reform movement founded in the late eighteenth century by scholar Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–87)
WALHI	Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Friends of the Earth Indonesia)
YKSSI	YKSSI: Yayasan Keluarga Sehat Sejahtera Indonesia (Foundation for Indonesian Health and Family Welfare)
<i>ziarah</i>	the practice of visiting and praying at the grave of a parent or holy person

1

Introduction

In the post-9/11 world, scholars and policy makers alike have grappled with the interplay between religion and politics. Islam has garnered a disproportionate amount of attention relative to other world religions. It has been turned upside down in search of insights into its potential as a source of radicalism and terror or, conversely, to be an agent of civil society development and a source of civic activism. In Indonesia, quite apart from the global post-9/11 dynamic, Islam was and is a vital element of politics. Indeed, it is often said that you cannot understand Indonesian politics without understanding Islam in Indonesia.

In recent years, the heightening of global tensions related to the ‘war on terror’ and the perceived antagonism between the ‘West’ and the ‘Muslim world’ have frequently brought Indonesia into the limelight as an example of a nation where democracy and Islam successfully cohabitate — indeed, where one cannot be separated from the other. Crucial to the uniqueness of Islam in Indonesia are the roles of the two largest mass-based Muslim organizations in the world — Nahdlatul Ulama or NU

(literally, ‘Revival of the Muslim Scholars’) and Muhammadiyah. These massive socio-religious organizations, which together represent over 75 million Indonesians, comprise vast interconnected networks of women, students, labourers, teachers, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), hospitals, schools, universities, legal aid agencies and many more affiliated units, reaching down to the village level across the country. They both represent a remarkable channel for constructive civic engagement. But Islam in Indonesia is very complex, and the historical rifts between NU and Muhammadiyah are indicative of the highly politicized nature of both organizations.

In an effort to shed light on the tangled web of Islamic politics, and to explore the example that Indonesia provides of a strong and thriving Islamic civil society, I take up in this book the case of NU. As this volume will show, NU is far from a monolithic organization. The contestation within NU on issues of identity, politics and religion affords the observer of Indonesian politics and Islam valuable insights into important developments within Islamic thought in the late New Order and early reform (*reformasi*) periods.

NU is the larger of the two mass-based organizations mentioned above. Founded in 1926, today it claims approximately 50 million members. Long active as both a political party and a religious organization, in 1984 it withdrew from formal politics in a move called *Kembali ke Khittah 1926*, or ‘Return to the Guidelines of 1926’. This gave NU room under the repressive Soeharto regime to develop a nascent civil society movement. In the twilight of the New Order period (1966–98) and during the early *reformasi* period, this movement became more critical of the state and at the same time gained momentum internally. One element of the discourse it produced was an opposition to ‘Islamist’ politics — a stance that was deeply embedded in the historical modernist–traditionalist¹ conflict colouring intra-Islamic relations in Indonesia for the previous century. In 1999, Abdurrahman Wahid stepped down from the leadership of NU to become the fourth President of Indonesia. This significantly complicated the position of NU’s civil society movement, which had gradually established for itself a ‘watchdog’ role towards the state.

This book examines the emergence of this civil society discourse in the historical context of *Kembali ke Khittah 1926* — also called *Khittah ‘26* throughout this volume — and explores the response of NU’s pro-civil society activists to political developments during Wahid’s presidency. In

particular, it analyses the underlying role of the modernist–traditionalist conflict in shaping not only understandings of ‘civil society’, but also important movements within Islam in Indonesia more generally. The case of NU reveals a great deal about the intersection between Islam and politics during this crucial time of transition to democracy; the contestation within NU itself about its identity as a ‘religious’ or as a ‘political’ organization is indicative of the fluid and shifting public perceptions of both politics and religion during this transformative period. As such, the case of NU provides important insights into the New Order period — why the regime fell, and how Indonesians envisioned, and continue to construct, a post-New Order society.

This book also examines in detail the phenomenon of what may seem counterintuitive to many international observers — a civil society movement *led* by Muslim intellectuals. It explores the origins of this movement, the political exigencies that underpin it, and the point at which it begins to take on a life of its own, separate from its primary architect, Abdurrahman Wahid.

These historical and contemporary developments in Indonesia serve as the empirical basis informing a broader analysis of the relationship between religion and politics.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND ISLAM

In recent decades a significant accumulation of scholarship has developed to counter the empirically inaccurate yet deeply ingrained and ideologically weighty history of separation between religion and politics in Enlightenment-derived thought. Especially important in this context has been the body of literature demonstrating, in Talal Asad’s words, that ‘even in Western liberal societies “modernized religion” and “secular culture” have supported each other in crucial, if often indirect, ways’ (Asad 1992: 3). The false construction of the ‘secular West’ versus the ‘religious, emotional, irrational East’ has been undermined by work revealing the symbiotic relationship between the Church (both Catholic and Protestant) and politics in Europe and America.²

The resurgence of religion in the public sphere more generally,³ and the global phenomenon of Islamic revivalism in particular, has forced both academics and policy makers to rethink their preconceptions about the role of religion in politics. This is especially crucial given the prevailing

empirical reality that democracy, in the broadest possible sense of the term, has become the most prominent political system worldwide, and is, according to John Esposito and John Voll (1996: 13), 'the dominant discourse of politics'.⁴ In the case of Islam, this evokes the historically long and often-heated debate about whether Islam is 'compatible' with democracy. A long line of thinkers from non-Muslim and Muslim traditions alike have argued, sometimes vehemently, that Islam is inherently incompatible with democracy. This already multi-layered debate has been given another overlay in recent years, with the addition of 'democratization' to the Bush administration's foreign policy agenda. This is discussed further in the final chapter of this book.

The classical orientalist view was of the 'despotic' and 'irrational' East where the weakness of society precluded constraints on an all-powerful state. As Turner (1994: 23) notes, 'the orientalist view of Asiatic society can be encapsulated in the notion that the social structure of the oriental world was characterized by the absence of a civil society'. Orientalist roots in the Western intellectual tradition led to a stark choice presented to Muslim nations between modernization and continuing to maintain the role of Islam in public life.⁵

This variant of early modernization theory soon became problematized by post-modern scholarship. However, its legacy lingers in the work of still-influential scholars like Bernard Lewis (1964: 48), who argued that Islamic societies contain no institutions (such as representative assemblies) capable of restraining the power of the state, as well as in the thinking of US policy makers, who view democratic institutions as those 'that would and could be "exported"' from the United States to strengthen global democratization (Esposito and Voll 1996: 19). Samuel Huntington's contribution to such neo-orientalist thinking has been well documented and overdiscussed. His controversial 'clash of civilizations' thesis rests on the foundation of a lifetime of work portraying Muslim societies as untrusting and untrustworthy (Huntington 1968: 29); undemocratic and unlikely to become democratic (Huntington 1984: 217); and violent (Huntington 1993: 34–5). There have been numerous refutations of his argument from both Muslim and non-Muslim quarters, but one significant example is Norris and Inglehart's (2002) analysis of the 1995–2001 results of the World Values Study, used to compare beliefs and values in 75 Muslim and non-Muslim nations. They found that in fact Muslim and non-Muslim societies held 'strikingly similar' political values, and that Huntington was mistaken in assuming a difference in democratic culture between the two groups.

There is also no shortage of Muslim thinkers arguing the incompatibility of Islam and democracy. Well known for such views was the founder of the Pakistani Islamist party Jamaati-i Islami (Islamic Party), Abul A'la Maududi (1903–79), who called for an Islamic state in which all authority and sovereignty belonged to God and all laws were derived from sharia. Similar, and influenced by Maududi, is the thought of Egyptian thinker Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), who argued that Islam was a 'total' way of life, and that even nominally Muslim societies belonged to the pre-Islamic period of 'ignorance' (*jahiliyah*) unless they practised total submission to God through sharia.⁶

Nevertheless, there is an equally significant effort, again among both non-Muslim and Muslim scholars, to argue that democracy is not the sole domain of the United States or even of the 'West', and that Islam contains democratic traditions and institutions of its own. Esposito and Voll (1996: 21) argue that in the Islamic context, religious resurgence and democratization:

... are contradictory and competitive only if democracy is defined in a highly restricted way and is viewed as possible only if specific Western European or American institutions are adopted, or if important Islamic principles are defined in a rigid and traditional manner.

Furthermore, they argue that the central Islamic principles of consultation (*shura*), consensus (*ijma*) and independent judgment (*ijtihad*) are fundamental building blocks for democracy within Islam (Esposito and Voll 1996: 25–38).⁷ Similarly, Robert Hefner (2000: 12) describes what he calls a 'civil pluralist Islam' that rejects 'the wisdom of a monolithic "Islamic" state, ... instead affirming democracy, voluntarism, and a valance of countervailing powers in a state and society'. Charles Kurzman, one of the foremost proponents of 'liberal Islam', argues that among the many interpretations and expressions of Islam, there is a 'tradition that voices concerns parallel to those of Western liberalism ... [such as] opposition to theocracy, support for democracy, [and] defense of freedom of thought' (Kurzman 1998: 4). Asef Bayat (2007) makes the important point that what is incompatible or compatible with democracy is not the religion *itself* (noting that early Christian leaders also rejected democracy) but the *practice* of religion; he argues that new social movements within Islam have the potential to democratize the practice of Islam. This argument will be supported in multiple ways throughout this book.

The Muslim thinkers variously labelled 'liberal', 'neo-modernist', 'progressive' and 'substantialist' are too many in number and too widely ranging in argument to detail here, but they include figures like Farid Esack, the young South African scholar known for his articulation of a 'progressive Islam';⁸ Muhammad Arkoun, the Algerian post-modernist Muslim scholar who rejects an 'authentic' Islam;⁹ the Egyptian intellectual and reformist Hassan Hanafi;¹⁰ the late Nurcholish Madjid, one of the architects of Indonesian neo-modernist Islam;¹¹ and Abdulaziz Sachedina.¹²

What these thinkers have in common is their conviction that there is not just one 'right way' to do democracy (despite the contrary opinion prevailing among many US policy makers and academics), but that democracy is a multivalent and varied political system that must be adapted to the socio-historical and cultural context in which it is applied. For many seeking to reconcile Islam and democracy, this usually means a rejection of the relegation of religion solely to the private, domestic or social sphere.¹³ On the contrary, many of these thinkers seek to locate a role for Islam precisely in the public sphere.

The small but growing literature dealing explicitly with the relationship between Islam and civil society provides a rich empirical foundation from which to counter stereotypical views of both Islam and civil society. There is, however, little construction of concrete frameworks or criteria for measuring or evaluating civil society within an Islamic context. Still, two fairly loose but nevertheless useful frameworks proposed in the literature may help to give some structure to the present evaluation of NU's civil society discourse.

The first is found in Esposito and Voll's (1996) *Islam and Democracy*. The authors argue that in many countries, democratization and Islamic revivalism, both of which experienced resurgences during the 1970s, were not two separate movements but, rather, deeply interconnected:

The most effective opposition to authoritarian regimes is expressed through a reaffirmation of the Islamic identity and heritage. ... [D]emocratization loses its secular dimensions as it becomes a popular, and more truly democratic, movement. In this way, the pressures for democratization in the Islamic world reinforce and give added strength to the Islamic resurgence (Esposito and Voll 1996: 16).

Based on a spectrum of what they call 'new Islamic movements' in six countries, Esposito and Voll find three main types of relationship between Islamic resurgence and democracy. In the first, a militant, populist Islamic

movement overthrows a Westernizing regime; in the second, legal Islamic movements participate in the political system; and in the third, illegal Islamic groups oppose the government (Esposito and Voll 1996: 9). Clearly the second category is the one in which one is most likely to find an Islamic organization functioning as an agent of civil society.¹⁴ Examining the case of Indonesia within this framework will be illustrative not only of the fact that it represents a significant departure from the norms of state–Islam interaction in most of the Muslim world, but also of the ways in which a new Islamic movement might operate within a political system not dominated by Islam.

Esposito and Voll use three criteria to assess the relationship between democratization and Islam in each of the six countries. They are: (1) the legality or illegality of the Islamic movement; (2) the degree to which the movement opposes or is cooperative towards the regime; and (3) whether the state permits political participation by the movement (Esposito and Voll 1996: 9). These criteria should help us explore the political context from which NU operated and developed its discourse on civil society; the shifting stances it adopted *vis-à-vis* the state; and the extent and nature of the political participation of its members as the degree of NU's autonomy from the state strengthened or waned.

Hefner's approach to the relationship between Islam and the state is also useful, not only because he explicitly raises the possibility of Muslim organizations promoting democratization by building 'mediating institutions in which citizens develop habits of free speech, participation, and toleration' (Hefner 2000: 13), but also because his work focuses on the experience of Islam in Indonesia. Hefner argues that the voluntary organizations that characterize Islam in Indonesia have the potential to be agents of civil society and democratization by promoting civil participation, if they are able to transcend sectarianism and promote a 'public culture of equality, justice, and universal citizenship' (Hefner 2000: 20).¹⁵ He challenges Robert Putnam's (1993) emphasis on the structure of voluntary organizations, arguing that their culture and discourse are equally important, but he also emphasizes the necessity of what he calls a 'civilized and self-limiting state' (Hefner 2000: 215).

Hefner posits three conditions that must be met for a civil society to emerge: (1) local intellectuals must find from their own experience a 'model of political culture that affirms principles of autonomy, mutual respect, and voluntarism'; (2) these values must be generalized 'beyond their

original confines to a broader public sphere'; and (3) these values must be supported by a variety of institutions, including the state (Hefner 2000: 36). He provides a useful analysis of the relationship of various Islamic organizations, including NU, to democratization and to the state. However, due to the breadth of the topic, he is unable to provide an in-depth look at the discourse and activist agenda of NU's civil society movement. This book will seek to do that, using the criteria and conditions given above.

This study concludes that both Esposito and Voll's as well as Hefner's emphasis on the state as a cooperative force — not just a sparring partner — in fostering civil society is relevant in the NU case. As will be seen, NU's civil society discourse, while coloured by oppositional rhetoric, emerged as a direct result of the Khittah '26 decision, a political move that was seen by many as a strategy to effect a reconciliation with the state. Thus, clearly, a zero sum state versus civil society paradigm is not relevant in this case. In terms of Hefner's conditions, while NU does have a political culture of mutual respect and voluntarism, its autonomy from the state has at times been compromised — most notably after Abdurrahman Wahid became president.

Nevertheless, the success of NU's civil society movement in generalizing values of pluralism and religious tolerance beyond their usual confines 'to a broader public sphere' has been perhaps surprisingly successful, if judged by the degree to which NU is associated in the public mind with civil society values. That success is not unqualified; again, there appear to have been serious lapses in NU's commitment to those values during the Wahid presidency. Still, seven years after Wahid was deposed, NU is still recognized as one of the primary forces promoting a pluralistic, tolerant and anti-sectarian expression of Islam in Indonesia. Given the growing concern over militancy in Southeast Asia, this is a significant achievement.

ISLAM AND POLITICS IN INDONESIA

Islam has always been an important player on the Indonesian political stage; some of the fiercest debates waged in the country's history have been about the role that Islam was to play *vis-à-vis* the state. In a post-9/11 context, the role of Islam in Indonesia — the third-largest democracy in the world — takes on heightened significance. Perhaps counterintuitively, most of the conflicts involving Islam throughout Indonesian history have

been intrafaith rather than interfaith conflicts — conflicts among Muslims themselves.

I argue in this book that the modernist–traditionalist divide (to be discussed in depth later) remains the primary division in Indonesian Islam. In exploring this claim, I find it useful to utilize the *aliran* model. From the 1950s until the mid 1980s (though less so after 1965), both Indonesian and non-Indonesian scholars primarily employed the *aliran* model for analysis of the relationship between Islam and politics. This model informed and inspired constructs such as ‘modernist’ and ‘traditionalist’ Islam, each with its respective political implications. These tools for explaining the relationship between Islam and politics also inform (and in turn are elucidated by) my own research.

First articulated by Clifford Geertz, the *aliran* model was based on the premise that Javanese society could be divided into cultural ‘streams’ (*aliran*) that stretched vertically from Jakarta down to the village level, and that were affiliated with particular political parties.¹⁶ These *aliran* crossed class, socio-economic and educational differences, and were marked by ‘primordial’ loyalties to a particular cultural and ideological affiliation. The central argument was that *aliran* determined political party affiliation, so that Javanese elite bureaucrats (*priyayi*), nominally Muslim, were associated with the secular-nationalist Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI); modernist Muslims were involved with the Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims (Masyumi) or the Indonesian Islamic Union Party (PSII); traditionalist Muslims voted for NU; and the workers and peasants followed the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) (Geertz 1959: 37, 1963: 14).

A core element of this model, and an approach to Indonesian Islam that dominated Western and Indonesian scholarship until the 1980s, was Geertz’s renowned distinction between *santri* and *abangan* Muslims.¹⁷ *Santri* Muslims were market-based, orthodox, “‘true Moslems” as they call themselves’ (Geertz 1960: 123), while *abangan* Muslims were religious relativists, ritual-oriented and ‘indifferent to doctrine’ (Geertz 1960: 127). The *santri* category was further broken down into ‘modern’ urban *santri* and ‘old-fashioned’ (*kolot*) rural *santri* (Geertz 1960: 130).¹⁸ This view of Indonesian Islam was contested by scholars such as Marshall Hodgson (1974, Vol. 2), who argued that it relied on an assumption of reformist/modernist Islam as the standard for pure Islam,¹⁹ and by more recent scholarship documenting the centrality of Islam (undiluted by Hindu–Buddhist beliefs) to Javanese society as early as the eighteenth century.²⁰

Geertz claimed that the *santri-abangan* split was the primary predictor of political party affiliation. His great contribution was to articulate the process by which divergences in religious tradition and belief came to inform political identity so deeply. I argue that this process is still relevant to an understanding of intra-Islamic relations in Indonesia today, so it may be useful to quote Geertz rather extensively here:

The highly urbanized elite forged their bonds to the peasantry not in terms of competing political and economic theory, which would have had little meaning in this rural context, but in terms of concepts and values already present there. Thus the major line of demarcation among the elite was between those who took Islamic doctrine as the overall basis of their mass appeal and those who took a generalized philosophical refinement of the indigenous syncretic tradition as such a basis, so in the countryside *santri* and *abangan* soon became not simply religious but political categories, denoting the followers of these two diffuse approaches to the organization of the emerging independent society. When the achievement of political freedom strengthened the importance of factional politics in parliamentary government, the *santri-abangan* distinction became, on the local level at least, one of the primary ideological axes around which the process of party maneuvering took place (Geertz 1957: 50–1). [emphasis added]

However, while the *santri-abangan* model, as originally formulated, may have had some explanatory power for village-level voting patterns, it did not explain elite-level political alliances in the early 1950s. A *santri-abangan* model would assume an alliance of the Muslim parties (NU and Masyumi) against the secular nationalists and communists. Instead, in 1952 NU withdrew from Masyumi, and in 1953, in a move cast by Masyumi as a betrayal of Islamic interests, joined PNI and the Greater United Party (PIR) in the first Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet.²¹ In a thorough examination of this phenomenal rejection of Islamic solidarity, Greg Fealy (1998: 120–8) argues that it was motivated primarily by a desire to maintain national unity and a functioning government. While this is undoubtedly true, other explanations also shed light on why this was not just a one-time political deal, but rather the beginning of an alliance that has existed, with some fluctuations, through to the present day.

How is it that *abangan*-based parties like PKI and PNI could form an alliance with a *santri* (*kolot*) party, NU, in opposition to another *santri* party, Masyumi? Dan Lev (1966: 77) explains it on the basis of a shared socio-cultural background:

The NU *kiaji* [religious leader], the PNI *prijaji*, and the PKI peasant speak the same language, frequently enjoy similar entertainment, and share the same stereotypes of the non-Javanese for whom Masjumi spoke.

This idea of a shared cultural background or community identity can be extended to explain the gaping chasm between groups of Javanese Muslims as well. As Lev notes elsewhere, historical and sociological differences emerged between socially conservative, land-owning, Sufist-influenced Muslims who collaborated with aristocratic elites, and the coastal-dwelling, more commercially oriented, reformist/modernist Muslims who had more to gain from change than from upholding the status quo (Lev 1994: 2–3). A sense of community identity emerged out of these layers of historical, sociological, doctrinal and ideological differences that was to create a fundamental gap between Indonesians from the same ethnic background, religion and even class.

Ultimately, this volume will show that Geertz was right about the way in which the *aliran* influence shaped the lives of Indonesians. He explained that:

... it becomes a symbol of his social identity, rather than a mere contrast in belief. The sorts of friends he will have, the sorts of organizations he will join, the sort of political leadership he will follow ... will all be strongly influenced by the side of this ideological bifurcation which he adopts as his own (Geertz 1957: 37).

The problem with Geertz's conflation of *abangan* Muslims and traditionalist Muslims — pointed out by many observers — was corrected eventually, not as a result of academic reconstructions, but as a result of political developments within Indonesia. After the 1965 communist purge, when it was no longer safe to take a desultory attitude towards religion, many previously *abangan* Javanese affiliated themselves with NU, because traditionalist Islam was more accepting of local and communal rituals and practices than modernist Islam. At this point the use of the term *aliran* came of its own accord to refer to the cultural and ideological split between modernists and traditionalists.²²

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, political scientists and other scholars began to take note of an emerging phenomenon that appeared to bridge the historical gap between traditionalists and modernists. Partly as a result of the repression of Islamic political activity, it seemed that energy and effort were being channelled into more intellectual arenas, leading to the

emergence of a cadre of intellectuals in both camps calling for a renewal of Islamic thought. Following Indonesian scholars Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy (1986), Greg Barton (1995) called this 'neo-modernism', a term originally coined by Fazlur Rahman. He put forward Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid as its foremost representatives.²³ Barton identified consistent themes of pluralism and anti-sectarianism in the thinking and writing of Wahid and Madjid from the 1970s onwards. This, he argued, was 'of great significance because it represents a movement of thought that combined progressive, liberal convictions with strong religious faith' (Barton 1995: 8). According to Barton, the emergence of neo-modernism rendered *aliran* ineffective as an analytical tool. For example, he said that 'to speak of NU as representing a single *aliran* now makes very little sense', because NU spanned such a wide spectrum of views, from liberal to conservative Islamic thinking (Barton 1994: 144). He argued that neo-modernist thinkers like Wahid and Madjid had more in common with each other than they did with some members of their respective organizations, NU and Muhammadiyah (Barton 1994: 144).

Bahtiar Effendy also noted the development of liberal intellectual thought among Muslim scholars from the 1970s onward, categorizing it as 'substantialist' (Effendy 1998: 212).²⁴ Effendy's substantialism was slightly more modernist-oriented than Barton's neo-modernism, but still included traditionalist Islam as represented by Wahid.²⁵ Substantialist Islam, he posited, was 'inclusive' and 'integrative', and opposed to the 'formalistic' and 'legalistic' expression of Islam (Effendy 1998: 212–3). According to him, substantialist scholars rejected the ideological and symbolic issues of political Islam — such as an Islamic state — in favour of issues that affected Indonesian society as a whole, namely 'democratization, religious and political tolerance, socio-economic egalitarianism and political emancipation' (Effendy 1998: 213–4).

William Liddle, under whose supervision Effendy wrote the dissertation in which he originally formulated the concept of substantialism, gave his student's term its first major play in Western academic circles in an article recounting the war-in-print between himself and the militant Islamic monthly magazine *Media Dakwah* (Liddle 1996). In it, he elaborated further the notion of substantialist Islam, and positioned it as directly countering 'scripturalist' Islam. Thus, substantialist Islam assumed most basically that 'substance or content of belief and practice is more important than the form', that Islamic texts must be continually reinterpreted by each generation, that tolerance of and dialogue with non-Muslims is important,

and that Indonesia's current form of government is final — that Indonesia should not become an Islamic state (Liddle 1996: 268). In Liddle's article, scripturalist Islam is represented primarily by the Islamic Education Council of Indonesia (DDII), described as 'among the most extreme or militant scripturalist organs tolerated by the government' (Liddle 1996: 270). The scripturalists' agenda is described as anti-American, anti-Jew, anti-Israel and anti-Christian, and deeply hostile towards substantialist Muslims (Liddle 1996: 270).

After Soeharto fell from power in 1998, and what Liddle would call scripturalist Islam proliferated as he had predicted it would,²⁶ Liddle appeared to grow more convinced that the two most important contending forces in Indonesian Islam were no longer traditionalism and modernism, but rather moderate Islam and militant Islam. In 2002, Liddle and a PhD student, Saiful Mujani,²⁷ presented a paper at a Jakarta conference in which they argued directly that:

The major source of this exaggeration [of the possibility of an Islamic state in Indonesia] is the widespread misperception that there is a great religious divide between Muslims and non-Muslims, or, in some formulations, Muslims and nationalists, in Indonesian politics. In our view, the actual great divide is between non-Muslims, syncretist, traditionalist and liberal modernist Muslims on one side and conservative modernist Muslims on the other (Liddle and Mujani 2002: 3).

Thus, for them, the moderate versus militant divide had become more relevant than the *aliran* divide, leading them to the optimistic conclusion that Islamic formalism and militancy were not likely to grow in Indonesia, as the moderates (when combined with non-Muslims, and when spanning both modernist and traditionalist circles) far outnumbered the militants.

I argue, on the other hand, that the declaration of an end to *aliran* politics is premature. I find that the conflict with the modernists — still often referred to collectively as 'Masyumi' — is far from forgotten, at least from the perspective of traditionalist intellectuals. This conflict underlies and informs the content and dissemination of a discourse among NU civil society activists opposing 'political Islam', and has been used to justify many of NU's political manoeuvres, including those that led to the ascent of Wahid to the presidency. Even when given the opportunity to ally themselves with progressive modernists in order to combat increasing Islamic militancy, NU activists have been unable to overcome their deeply rooted hostility towards modernist Muslims.

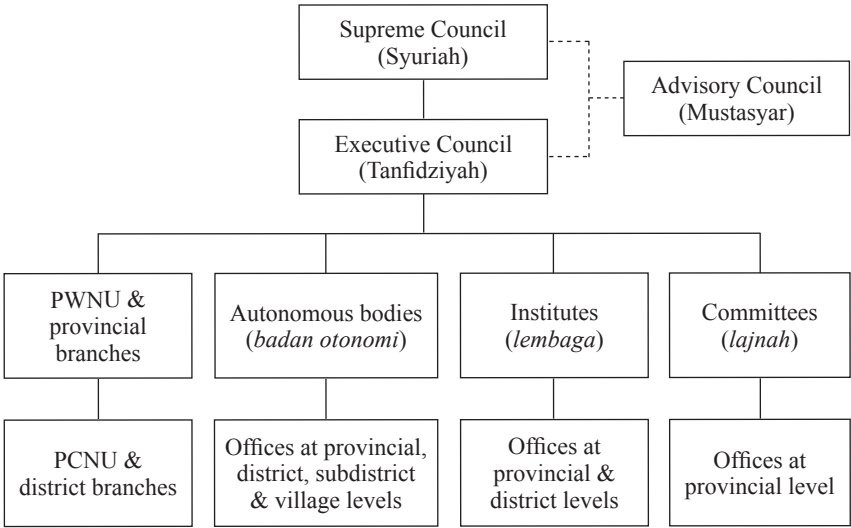
It is not the intention of this study to reinscribe or solidify the borders of a dichotomy that, it should be emphasized, are highly blurred and porous. There is a great deal of overlap between modernists and traditionalists, and many important neo-modernist thinkers, such as Nurcholish Madjid and Azyumardi Azra, come from NU backgrounds. Similarly, many NU civil society activists and progressive modernist intellectuals are close friends, and share a common vision. But despite such ideological or philosophical commonalities, there is a sense of 'difference' between the two groups that seems to flare up at times of political crisis. Thus, while many scholars would perhaps like to be able to move beyond *aliran* politics as a means of understanding Islam and politics in Indonesia, I argue that, when used in reference to the traditionalist-modernist divide, it is still the most relevant explanatory tool available.

NU: USING POLITICS FOR RELIGIOUS ENDS

NU's birth and early history are examined in detail in Chapter 2. But in brief, NU was established in 1926 primarily because traditionalist religious scholars (*ulama*) in what was to become Indonesia felt threatened by the wave of modernism and reformism sweeping the Muslim world. They banded together into an organization in order to protect the traditional rituals and practices they adhered to. NU played an active role in the fight for Indonesian independence, and became a political party in 1952. In 1984 it withdrew from formal politics as part of the *Kembali ke Khittah 1926* movement. While it has never again become a political party, NU has remained active in the world of Indonesian politics since 1984.

Structurally, NU has an Executive Board (PBNU) at the national level, and boards at the provincial, district, subdistrict and village levels. Governance is carried out by the PBNU's three councils: the Supreme Council (Syuriah), the Administrative Council (Tanfidziyah) and the Advisory Council (Mustasyar) (see Figure 1). Originally the Syuriah was viewed as the highest governance body within NU, with the Tanfidziyah serving as an implementing body. As will be seen later, the actual status and power of these two councils reversed over time. In addition to this formal governance structure, in the early 2000s (the period of most interest to us in the later chapters of this book), NU had nine autonomous bodies, eleven institutes and five committees, most of them boasting branch offices throughout Indonesia's 30 provinces and hundreds of districts. Examples

FIGURE 1
Organizational Structure of NU



Source: <<http://www.nu.or.id>>.

of autonomous bodies include the NU Women’s Organization (Muslimat NU), the NU Young Women’s Organization (Fatayat NU), the Ansor Youth Group and the NU high school students’ associations (IPNU and IPPNU). Examples of NU institutes include the NU Family Welfare Institute (LKKNU), the NU Agricultural Development Institute (LP2NU) and the Pesantren Institute (RMI). Examples of committees include the Astrology Committee (Lajnah Falakiyah) and the Committee for Religious Problem Solving (Lajnah Bahtsul Masail). A complete list of the autonomous bodies, institutes and committees in 2008 is given in Appendix 1.

In 2006, NU described its vision as being ‘the establishment of social justice and democratic order, based on the Islamic doctrine of *ahlussunah waljama’ah*,²⁸ and its mission as being ‘to influence the legal system and promote policies that ensure social justice and democratic order, as well as community empowerment’ (PBNU 2006). The official PBNU website (<http://www.nu.or.id>) states that NU’s aim is to ‘institute the teachings of Islam, based on *ahlussunah wal jama’ah*, throughout society, within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia’.

As will be detailed in this book, despite ridding itself of its political party status and underscoring its identity as a socio-religious organization, NU remained politically active, and some elements within the organization continued to advocate strongly for a more overt political role for NU. When the New Order ended, affording NU an opportunity to revisit its own interests and inclinations, these elements pushed forward, leading to the formation of the National Awakening Party (PKB) and three other NU-affiliated parties. The machinations and discourse behind this process of political party formation reveal much about the rhetoric, motivations and political orientation of NU, as well as shedding light on the wider political landscape in Indonesia at that tumultuous time. The debate among the new NU-affiliated parties also showcases the broader debate in the early 2000s about the role of political Islam, the Jakarta Charter and an Islamic state. This volume shows how, in the early *reformasi* period, the discourse of Khittah '26 enabled both the 'political' and 'social' wings of NU to aim at the same target — 'political Islam'.

THE STUDY OF NU

Scholars of Indonesian politics have long recognized the importance of NU both as a political player and as a producer of religious discourse. However, there is somewhat of a generation gap in the scholarly literature on NU. In the 1950s and 1960s, a series of important analyses of Indonesian politics contained substantial examinations of NU, primarily as a political party. These included *The Transition to Guided Democracy* by Daniel Lev (1966), *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* by Herbert Feith (1962) and *The 1971 Election in Indonesia* by Ken Ward (1974). By and large they treated NU as just another political party — its 'Islamicness' was not a central element of the analysis.

During the 1970s and 1980s, European, Australian and North American observers seem to have been more interested in modernist Islam than in NU, and little was written about the organization during that time. A very important exception was a short article by Sidney Jones (1984), which is still commonly cited by scholars. The 1990s, however, witnessed a renewed flurry of interest in NU, this time with a focus on NU itself as an organization. As discussed above, in the mid 1990s Greg Barton began to discuss the thinking of Abdurrahman Wahid, and in 1995 Douglas Ramage included a chapter on Wahid and NU in his *Politics in Indonesia*. The first

book-length works on NU by non-Indonesian authors also appeared around this time. The first was *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru* [NU: Tradition, Power Relations and the Search for a New Discourse] by Martin van Bruinessen (1994). The second was *Islam et Armée dans l'Indonésie Contemporaine* [Islam and the Army in Contemporary Indonesia] by Andrée Feillard (1995), though this important contribution did not attract widespread attention among non-French-speaking academics until it was published in Indonesian in 1999.

In 1996, the English-speaking academic world was given its first detailed, analytical look at NU with the publication of *Nahdlatul Ulama, Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia* edited by Greg Barton and Greg Fealy (1996). It included chapters by all of the contemporary leading experts on NU: Barton and Fealy themselves, Douglas Ramage, Andrée Feillard, Mitsuo Nakamura and Martin van Bruinessen. It examined NU's political and religious thinking as well as its political history, from the transition to the New Order until the mid 1990s. In 1998, Fealy made another significant contribution to academic understanding of NU through his dissertation, 'Ulama and Politics in Indonesia: A History of Nahdlatul Ulama, 1952–1967'. In 1999, Suzaina Kadir explored the relations between NU and the state through her dissertation, 'Traditional Islamic Society and the State in Indonesia: The Nahdlatul Ulama, Political Accommodation and the Preservation of Autonomy'.

In short, the literature in the 1950s and 1960s tended to approach NU as just one among many political players, while later work focused on NU itself and, more specifically, on its relations with the state.

This volume departs from the existing work in two important ways. First, rather than looking at NU's interests and power relations *vis-à-vis the state* as the most important explanatory variable in its behaviour, I argue that it is NU's relationship with *modernist Islam* that shapes much of its public and political behaviour. I find that NU's political interactions with the state and its public political rhetoric were primarily, if covertly, intended to improve NU's political position *vis-à-vis* the modernist Muslims — not, as one might expect, to strengthen its position *vis-à-vis* the state. The consistent rationale even for the formal political manipulations of Khittah '26 was the need to protect NU's political territory against modernist Muslims, hence protecting the traditionalist way of life and set of beliefs. And when NU intellectuals and activists began to articulate a discourse of 'autonomous' civil society in the mid 1990s, the aim was not so much

to take a critical stance towards the New Order regime as to demonstrate the complicity of modernist Muslim intellectuals with the state apparatus. Thus, while NU's actions and motivations were certainly political, they were often informed more by the struggle over divergent sets of religious beliefs, cultural norms and identities than by the desire to advance NU's own position with regard to the state.

Similarly, factoring the modernist–traditionalist conflict into the analysis allows us to explain Wahid's flip-flop in the late 1990s from virulent critic to docile supporter of the state, as well as his ascension to the presidency after campaigning for 15 years to keep NU out of formal politics. This volume will show that the civil society rhetoric produced by many of NU's civil society activists contained a subtext directed at modernist Muslims, which again explains why the critical edge of this rhetoric was dulled somewhat during Wahid's presidency. At the same time, I conclude that the commitment of most activists to the promotion of religious tolerance, pluralism and the need to restrain state power was *not* politically motivated, in spite of the highly political motivations of the movement's founder, Abdurrahman Wahid.

A second distinction between this work and other analyses of NU is that it is the only one to focus on the civil society movement and civil society discourse, especially from the perspective of the activists and intellectuals that made up the movement. This volume examines the political context in which NU's civil society movement emerged, and explores the political and religious motivations that informed the civil society discourse that resulted. It questions both the intent and the effect of the discourse. It asks how deeply the values and principles promoted by the civil society movement have penetrated NU as an organization, and what its effects have been. NU's discourse on civil society is deeply coloured by notions of autonomy and opposition. Hence this study explores what happens when the civil society organization itself becomes closely associated with the government — can its 'civil society' identity be maintained?

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Chapter 2 examines the origins of NU in the context of the Khittah '26 claim to 'return to the original spirit' of NU. It explores the political and religious motivations that were instrumental in NU's formation, and during

its early years. It also discusses the relationship between modernists and traditionalists at the time of NU's birth, and examines the history of NU's relationship with Masyumi.

Chapter 3 begins with a historical look at the internal developments and the external political relations between NU and the state that led to the formulation of the *Kembali ke Khittah* 1926 movement. The first half of the chapter uncovers the multiple interpretations and motivations behind the *Khittah '26* movement. The second half looks at the civil society movement and discourse that emerged from the *Khittah '26* decision, with special attention to the grassroots-level activism thus spawned.

Chapter 4 reviews the tumultuous events of 1998–2000. It provides empirical data on NU's role in the downfall of Soeharto and describes its activities during the brief presidency of Habibie and the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid.

Using the historical narrative provided in Chapter 4 as a framework, Chapter 5 takes a more analytical look at the responses and reactions of four sections of NU to the presidency of Wahid: (1) the *ulama* and elite politicians, as represented at NU's 30th National Congress (*Muktamar*); (2) the organization's leaders; (3) Wahid himself; and (4) NU's civil society activists.

Chapter 6 seeks to draw together lessons learned from the observations in preceding chapters, and elaborates more deeply the arguments presented in this introduction. It also looks at the state of the civil society discourse and movement within NU in 2008, ten years after the collapse of the New Order regime.

Notes

1. The terms 'modernist' and 'traditionalist' will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2, but for the purposes of this chapter, the former refers to those Muslims who adhere solely to the Qur'an and Hadith as divine text, while the latter refers to those Muslims who follow the guidance of the four schools (*mazhab*) of the *ulama* from the classical era.
2. See, for example, Reichley (1985) and Thieman (1996). It is important to remember that the much acclaimed 'separation of church and state' in Europe took place only after the Reformation, and was not a construct inherent to European culture.
3. Casanova (1992: 17–58) documents four developments that heralded a renewed public role for religion: (1) the Islamic revolution in Iran; (2) the rise of Solidarity

in Poland; (3) the importance of Protestant fundamentalism in American politics; and (4) the role of Catholicism in the Nicaraguan revolution.

4. This conclusion may be more wishful thinking than empirical fact. It must be heavily qualified by an immediate admission that 'democracy' as a term is less than useful, because it has such a wide range of possible interpretations and uses. It can be 'all things to all people', and its normative value is such that it is invoked by all manner of political actors to lend legitimacy to their agendas. A vast range of criteria for 'democracy' have been put forward by scholars over the years, most often reflecting whatever political ideology was in vogue in academic departments at the time. For the purposes of this study, I find Abootalebi's formulation useful:

By democracy is meant a political system where (1) different groups, regardless of their ideological persuasions, have the right to compete for political power within the boundaries of the law; (2) the elected representatives are chosen in fair and competitive elections and are responsive, through elections, to the wishes of a majority of the people; and (3) an elaborate and meaningful set of civil liberties, especially those liberties that are most directly related to the expression of political rights, is provided to the public and respected by the ruling officials (Abootalebi 2000: 37).

5. Lerner (1958) provides an early example of modernization theory applied to the 'Muslim world'. Based on empirical work done in the Middle East, he concludes that the spread of 'modern' educational institutions, the process of urbanization, the development of mass media and increasing political participation would inevitably lead to the emergence of 'modern' societies in this region — a development that would preclude the role of religion in the public sphere.
6. For a more thorough discussion of both Maududi and Qutb, see Bubalo and Fealy (2005: 15–22) and Hefner (2005: 22–3).
7. This is not a new argument; it has been proposed by Muslim reformists since the beginning of the reform movement in the early twentieth century, in an attempt to seek authenticity and legitimacy for these concepts by rooting them in Islamic language and tradition. In fact, Norton (1996: 11) argues that contemporary Arab thinking has advanced far beyond this stage, in that thinkers are now dealing with questions of 'civility (*madani*), minority rights (*huquq al-aqalliyya*) and confidence or security (*ta'min*)'. Meanwhile, Browsers (2001: 129) asserts that while many contemporary Islamists reject the use of the term *dimuqratiyya* (the direct Arabic translation of 'democracy') because of its foreign origins and tradition, they do articulate a notion of Islamic democratic values based on the concept of *shura*.

8. See, for example, *Qur'an, Liberation, and Pluralism* (Esack 1997), in which Esack makes an elaborate argument for a Qur'anic hermeneutic of pluralism as part of a broader struggle for justice and religious pluralism.
9. Perhaps the most accessible presentation of Arkoun's thought is found in *Rethinking Islam* (Arkoun 1994). In it he expounds the need for a battle against 'the mythologization and ideologization of Islam proclaimed by militants of all sorts' (Arkoun 1994: 2) — that is, against Islamist *ulama* as well as Western orientalist, both of whom, he asserts, portray a static and fragmented picture of Islam.
10. Hanafi's agenda of liberation of and support for Islam's oppressed masses and his attention to class issues within the Islamic reform movement have made him one of the best-known representatives of the 'Islamic left'. For a more detailed look at Hanafi, see the chapter on him in Esposito and Voll (2001).
11. Chapter 3 examines Madjid's thought more closely. His contributions to an articulation of a progressive, democratic Islam are far too numerous to list here, but two examples available in English are Woodward (1996) and Madjid (2001).
12. Sachedina (2001: 11) makes an important contribution by attempting to 'map some of the most important political concepts in Islam that advance better human relationships'.
13. While modern European and North American scholarship has successfully portrayed 'Western' society as restricting religion to the private domain, it should be remembered that the early eras of Christianity, Catholicism and Judaism were all characterized by deep involvement of religion in the political system.
14. Iran and Sudan are examples of the first category, and Algeria and Egypt of the third category.
15. Similar arguments have been made by other observers of Indonesian politics, both Indonesian and non-Indonesian. See Nagata (2000: 225–39) for what she calls a half-century tradition of civil society in Indonesia, including contributions by Muslim organizations. The foremost Indonesian thinkers claiming that Muslim organizations are potential agents of civil society are Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid and A.S. Hikam. They will be discussed in Chapter 3.
16. See, for example, Geertz (1957, 1959, 1960, 1963) and Jay (1963). While Geertz presented *aliran* as a uniquely Indonesian phenomenon, it was actually modelled on the Dutch 'pillar' (*verzuiling*) system, in which ideological pulls drew various affiliated organizations to cluster around a corresponding political party, giving it a strong social base. To some degree this system still exists in the Netherlands and other European nations, largely centred on the capitalist–socialist divide. My thanks to Dan Lev for pointing this out to me.

17. Woodward (1996: 29) claims that *The Religion of Java* (Geertz 1960), where Geertz most fully articulates these categories, is the 'standard reference on Indonesian Islam — the work against which all others must be judged'. While very few scholars invoke these categories uncritically any more, it is true that they are still seen extremely frequently in both Indonesian and non-Indonesian scholarship.
18. This division corresponds to the contemporary categories of 'modernist' and 'traditionalist' as I use them in this chapter.
19. Indeed, in describing the characteristics of *santri* Muslims, Geertz reveals that he is indeed talking about modernist Islam:

... among the *santri* concern with doctrine almost entirely overshadows the ... ritualistic aspects of Islam. ... It is not the knowledge of ritual detail or spiritual discipline which is important, but the application of Islamic doctrine to life. ... In the countryside the doctrinal aspect is less marked; there the *santri* ethic remains somewhat closer to the *abangan* ... [I]n any case the rural *santri* follows an urban leadership (Geertz 1960: 127).

20. Sears (1996: 216) describes the colonial project of distancing Islam from Javanese culture, and Geertz's reiterations of that project, as 'the most important myth, [that] Islam was something foreign to Java, a shallow overlay on a deeply ingrained Hindu-Buddhist Javanese past'. See also Hefner (1985), Woodward (1989) and Florida (1995).
21. These events are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
22. Thus, Barton (1994: 143) writes that: 'In the fifties and sixties Indonesian Islamic thought could crudely, but reasonably accurately, be described in terms of the two major *aliran*, or streams, of Traditionalism and Modernism'.
23. Barton (1995) claimed that Wahid, Madjid and Djohan Effendy (another prominent neo-modernist) themselves used the term 'neo-modernism' to describe their thinking. However, Barton was the first to locate their writing and thought in a broader stream of Islamic thinking in Indonesia.
24. Effendy originally used this term in his dissertation, for which he received a PhD in political science from Ohio State University in 1994.
25. Effendy characterizes Dawam Rahardjo, Djohan Effendi, Adi Sasono, A. Syafii Maarif, Kuntowijoyo and Amien Rais — all notably modernist thinkers — as substantialist, in addition to Wahid and Madjid.
26. For example, in 1996 Liddle had written that:

... the success of the substantialists ... has been too dependent on the support of authoritarian politicians whose needs happen to have coincided with theirs. In a more open or democratic political climate ... it is probable that the scripturalists would have many more political resources, in mass acceptance of their ideas ... than they have now (Liddle 1996: 284).

27. Mujani is currently the executive director of Lembaga Survei Indonesia, a respected survey institute.
28. A definition and discussion of *ahlussunah waljama'ah* is provided in Chapters 2 and 3 of this book.

2

The Origins of NU and the Conflict with Masyumi

The establishment of NU came about as a direct result of the local and international struggles between modernist and traditionalist Islam. The narratives of NU's birth written by post-Khittah '26 scholars sought to cast the organization's origins in a 'pure' religious light in order to consolidate the Khittah '26 movement. This chapter examines these dynamics. It then looks at the relationship between NU and Masyumi during the Soekarno era, with attention to the factors contributing to the ultimate rivalry between the two Muslim groups.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAM IN INDONESIA

The gradual, relatively peaceful spread of Islam throughout the archipelago now known as Indonesia, and the fairly harmonious way in which Muslim beliefs were folded into pre-existing cultures and practices, has meant that

for much of Indonesia's history Islam has occupied a rather understated position. Often ignored both by scholars of Islam, who consider Indonesia to exist on the margins of the 'Muslim world', and by the general public, who are unaware that Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world, Islam in Indonesia (at least prior to 11 September 2001) has often been regarded as unimportant by both academics and non-academics. However, Islam was a crucial factor not only in the anti-colonial struggle for independence, but also in the process of state formation, in the struggle over the nature of the state and subsequently in the political history of Indonesia.

The prevailing narrative of the origins of Islam in Indonesia is that it was introduced by Arab traders via India during the eighth century, but that it was not until around the thirteenth century that large-scale conversions took place, firstly on the island of Sumatra. The variant of Islam exported from India was suffused with elements of mysticism and Sufism and thus did not effect much discontinuity with the Hindu-Buddhist tradition existent on Sumatra and Java. With the conversion to Islam of the Majapahit Kingdom — the last Hindu-Buddhist dynasty on Java — in the sixteenth century, Islam was well on its way to becoming the dominant religion throughout most of the archipelago.¹

While European and American narratives of this history often emphasize that Islam came to Indonesia by way of India, many NU narratives reject this assertion, arguing that Islam came to Indonesia directly from the Middle East.² According to Sears (1996: 45), both accounts are valid: some visitors brought Islam with them directly from the Middle East after the eleventh century, but Muslim influences had been filtering into Indonesia from India long before this. Meuleman (2005) provides a nuanced account of the historiography of the origins of Islam in Indonesia, noting the ideological and political motivations for the various positions held on Arab versus Asian influences.

The colonial rule of first the Dutch and later the Japanese not only shaped later notions of Indonesian national identity, but also strongly influenced the development of Islam in Indonesia. European orientalist articulations of Islam and fears of its potential to mobilize unrest led the Dutch colonial administrators to implement two major policies with regard to Islam. First, Dutch colonial discourse articulated a distinction between the 'authentic' traditional essence of Indonesia on the one hand and Islamic belief and practice on the other, portraying the latter as a foreign import. This was reinforced by the Dutch policy of implementing its administration on Java

through the *priyayi* — the Javanese, and largely only nominally Muslim, bureaucratic elite. This policy led to the increasing Westernization and secularization of this class, resulting in turn in a growing tension between the *priyayi* and the Islamic elite (Benda 1958: 13–8).³

A second mechanism of colonial control and construction of Indonesian Islam was that implemented by Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch scholar of Islam and the internal affairs advisor to the colonial government from 1889 to 1906. Hurgronje distinguished between religion and politics within Islam, encouraging the former but not tolerating the latter (Benda 1958: 20–9; Mawardi 1967: 15). Thus, while the Dutch government made attempts to subsidize Islamic education, any sign of political incitement of Muslims would immediately be suppressed. These two policies — colonial constructions of Indonesian Islam as ‘inauthentic’ to both Indonesia and Islam, as well as the distinction between political and religious Islam — were to have longlasting effects, not only on early Indonesian nationalism, but also, to this day, on state–Islam relations.

It was from within Muslim circles that resistance to colonial rule initially emerged. The Islamic Association (Sarekat Islam), founded in 1912, is usually cited as the first instance of a nationalist organization, but in fact there are earlier instances of Muslim-led resistance. These include the repeated battles of Sultan Agung of Mataram against the Dutch between 1628 and 1645; the uprisings of Sultan Ageng Tirtoyoso of Banten and his son against the Dutch in 1682 until they were imprisoned; and the continual battles between the *ulama* of Aceh and the Dutch until approximately 1913.⁴ In the early 1900s a new group of nationalists emerged. It comprised European-educated professionals whose exposure to, and enthusiasm for, ideals of secularism and modernism divided them from both the Muslim-led nationalists in Sarekat Islam and the mass-based Muslim organizations. As Benda (1958: 57) points out, the modern political training and education of these ‘secular’ nationalists enabled them, in spite of their lesser numbers, to gain the upper hand over the ‘Muslim’ nationalists in the struggle over how independence was to be achieved, and eventually over the ideological basis of the new nation.⁵

It should be noted that the division between secular and Muslim nationalists was not one between Muslims and non-Muslims; almost all of the so-called secular nationalists — Soekarno, Muhammad Hatta, M. Yamin, Soepomo and so on — were Muslim. Rather, in essence the division was about the role that Islam was to play in the new state. The

secular nationalists called for a state founded on the 'high ideals of Islam', but with religious matters completely separate from the state apparatus. The Muslim nationalists — also by and large well-educated (some even Western-educated) men who were familiar with theories of socialism and nationalism — felt that this was the wrong foundation upon which to build a nation; they believed that Islam offered a much more complete and solid social order than a state based on individualism and secular politics. Heated debates over these conflicting positions were to take place not only upon the formation of the state of Indonesia, but later in the Constituent Assembly (Konstituante). Indeed, they continue in the present day.

Another fundamental factor enabling the secular nationalists to achieve a position of dominance was the lack of unity among Muslim nationalists, specifically the deep chasm between traditionalist and modernist Muslims. This cleavage will be discussed at length in the ensuing pages. For the moment, it is enough to say that it not only weakened the unity of Muslim resistance against the Dutch, and later allowed the secular nationalists to gain the upper hand in the formation of the state, but also developed into perhaps the most visible and conflict-producing characteristic of Islam in Indonesia.

THE ORIGINS OF NU

The purpose of this section is not to provide a chronological account of the events leading up to the establishment of NU; this has already been done very thoroughly by both NU and non-NU scholars, Indonesian as well as non-Indonesian.⁶ A prevailing theme that emerges in almost all accounts of NU's origins is that of the organization's 'essential nature', that is, the question of whether at birth NU was primarily a religious or a political organization. Even a casual acquaintance with NU's history reveals an ongoing struggle between these two often-competing elements of identity — a struggle that speaks volumes about the interplay of religion and politics in Indonesia more generally. While these two elements can be understood as coexisting within the organizational identity of NU, they are definitely seen as mutually exclusive categories which do not even necessarily interact well. The strength of the belief that politics is 'unclean', especially when contrasted with the 'purity' of religion, has engendered a discourse created almost explicitly to cloak NU in the mantle of religious identity while enabling it to function politically. The success of

this discourse has hinged on the claim of original, essential purity — that is, narratives of a purely religious identity at birth. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to examine the existing narratives as well as portions of internal NU discourse and reconstructions of NU's history for clues as to the religious and political elements of NU's identity at the crucial moment of its own birth.

It is important to recognize the almost dialectical relationship between religion and politics at the point of NU's birth for historical reasons, but also because it is vital to an understanding of NU's later decision to abandon politics and become a purely religious and social organization. As will be explored at length in Chapter 3, the prevailing narrative of the decision to 'Return to the Guidelines of 1926' (*Kembali ke Khittah 1926*) centres on a return to a pristine, pure state of being wholly religious in orientation — of a refusal to be sullied by the dirty and mundane world of politics. The power of *Khittah '26* as a trope is in its ability to evoke a 'memory' of a time when NU occupied the high moral ground of Islam, before its descent into the world of politics where it became exposed to charges of opportunism and accommodationism. In fact, one could argue that the speed with which *Khittah '26* became a mantra of sorts, an inviolable precept, had to do with a desire to erase this particular period of NU's history, or at least dim its memory.⁷

The adoption of *Khittah '26* at NU's Situbondo National Congress (*Muktamar*) in 1984 represented a victory for a group of intellectuals and activists over the politicians who had dominated NU for decades. This group has maintained a strong position within NU, with one of its most vociferously defended points being that NU should not return to the world of practical politics. This situation of course became much more complicated with the establishment in 1998 of the National Awakening Party (PKB) based largely on an NU constituency, and even more so when lead activist Abdurrahman Wahid decided to run for the presidency. One of the purposes of this volume is to examine how the discourse of *Khittah '26* and the revered purity of NU was used by both the politicians and the anti-politicians in NU during this time. Both sides invoked *Khittah '26* and harkened back to NU's original purpose and nature in support of their cause.

Thus, it is important to gain an understanding of the historical factors and internal motivations leading up to the formation of NU, as well as its policies and activities during its first few years of existence. This

is not in an effort to compare the 'historical facts' with the 'discursive narrative' produced later, but rather to explore the historical context in which the political and religious layers of NU's identity were produced and reproduced. I will argue that NU has always been politically oriented, but that this does not necessitate the exclusion of religion as a fundamental and formative element of its identity. One means of understanding the complicated relationship between these two intertwined and often overlapping forces is to view NU's birth as primarily a response to the development of modernist Islam in Indonesia.⁸ This approach affords insight into the rich interplay of religious and political factors involved in the historic modernist versus traditionalist conflict in Indonesia, while also providing a view of this important cleavage from inception.

The Traditionalist versus Modernist Cleavage

The terms 'modernist' and 'traditionalist' are widely used to describe the two main groupings within Islam in Indonesia. These terms are problematic for many reasons, one being that the social realities they represent do not match commonplace understandings of the words themselves — that is, a modernist Muslim is likely to be more literal and less flexible in his or her adherence to Islam than a traditionalist, and a traditionalist is more likely to espouse supposedly 'modern' values such as pluralism and interfaith tolerance. Other terms that describe similar, though not identical, divisions are 'scripturalist' versus 'substantialist' and 'reformist' versus 'orthodox'. While all of these terms have their problems and pitfalls, I have chosen to use 'modernist' and 'traditionalist' primarily because they are the terms most often used by Indonesians themselves. In addition, they do accurately reflect a sociological and theological divide that exists among Indonesian Muslims in a way that the other terms do not.

Long before NU was established as a formal organization, traditionalist Islam was the predominant expression of Islam in Indonesia, especially on the island of Java. Islam's relatively peaceful infiltration of the archipelago was achieved in many instances by integrating pre-existing beliefs and customs rather than wiping them out — which may partially account for the (seemingly counterintuitive) pluralist nature of traditionalist Islam in Indonesia. Indeed, Suprpto (1987: 23) argues that the reason the Syafi'i school of doctrine (*mazhab*)⁹ was so widely received in the thirteenth century, becoming the prevailing source of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)¹⁰

throughout Indonesia, was that it was able to accommodate pre-existing traditions so flexibly. Informal networks of *kiai* and *ulama* clustered around a hierarchy of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) comprised as much of a structure as existed at the time.¹¹ The *kiai* and *ulama* were often medium-sized landowners whose landholdings and positions were handed down within bloodlines. The *santri*, or students in the *pesantren*, were usually the sons and daughters of farmers in the surrounding community who worked the land of the *kiai*. The relationship between a *kiai* and his *santri* therefore often involved a material patron–client dynamic that was further strengthened by the spiritual bond between them.

Theologically, traditionalist Islam is rooted in the core belief that the Prophet Muhammad presided over the most glorious and perfect era of Islam, and that the purity of the religion has deteriorated gradually with distance from the era of the Prophet. In order to maintain the purity or orthodoxy of Islam, traditionalist Islam holds that practice and belief must be based on the teachings of venerated *ulama* who were capable of understanding the truths of that era. Consensus among the medieval *ulama* about those truths was consolidated into the classical texts (*kitab kuning*) of the four main *mazhab*. Traditionalist Islam is characterized by the practice of *taqlid*, or reliance on the legal interpretations of the medieval *ulama* and of the four *mazhab*. *Pesantren* are the backbone of traditionalist Islam, not only because this is where knowledge of the classical texts is passed from generation to generation, but also because the culture of unquestioning obedience of *santri* for *kiai* provides daily reinforcement of the core value of the authority of the *ulama*.

A second key element of traditionalist Islam is the acceptance and even preservation of beliefs and practices that have evolved in local cultural contexts over the centuries. These include Sufism, many aspects of mysticism and, in some cases, practices apparently rooted in pre-Islamic traditions. As one scholar explains:

Traditionalists believe that Islam is not merely a set of abstract and utopian principles, but a comprehensive and living belief system that interacts with the historical and cultural traditions of devout Muslims. To suppress these traditions, therefore, would be to weaken the popular form of devotion of the Muslim majority (Husain 1995: 81).

The reformist/modernist¹² movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be traced to the eighteenth-century Wahhabi movement and

was further developed by Middle Eastern intellectuals such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–97), Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905), Rashid Rida (1865–1935) and Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). Originating in Arabia, Wahhabism took root in the efforts of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92) to rid Islam of what he saw as corruption and laxity, including many of the Sufi practices and elements of ‘popular Islam’ that had become integrated into the religion over the years. He rejected the teachings of the medieval *ulama*, calling for adherence solely to the Qur’an and its accompanying body of Sunnah — the accounts of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. Although ‘Abd al-Wahhab was not the only reformer to call for an elimination of syncretism within Islam, the movement he founded has been the most popular and enduring.¹³

The reformist movement spread to Indonesia in the early twentieth century, introduced by Indonesian *ulama* who had studied in the Middle East (Ida 1996: 3). Modernism sprang from an era in which the European and North American world was experiencing a revolution of thought and achievement and, comparatively, Islamic civilization appeared to be in decline. Modernists sought to restore Islam to its rightful glory, and in some cases resist Western dominance, by appropriating and integrating the technological and scientific advances of the non-Muslim world. They also sought to rid Islam of the accretions of the past — the traditions and texts that had become embedded in the religion over the centuries — calling for adherence to the Qur’an and Sunnah alone. They rejected the traditionalist practice of *taqlid*, insisting instead upon the right to independent judgment (*ijtihad*) of the scriptures. They therefore rejected the traditionalists’ adherence to the four Sunni *mazhab*, relying instead on individual interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunnah. This latter aspect led to one of the greatest tensions and ironies of modernist Islam: although the insistence on the right of *ijtihad* was intended to widen the circle of those permitted the freedom of individual and contextualized interpretation of the scriptures, in practice, the critical evaluation of all texts and teachings except the Qur’an and Sunnah had a rigidifying effect and led to the development of a legalistic stream within modernist Islam.

Thus, while modernists maintain that scripture contains the one true and correct interpretation, which can be attained if the individual follows the teaching closely enough, traditionalists maintain the ambiguity of the scriptures, and therefore rely on past wisdom to interpret them, as well as tolerating a variety of rituals and practices, since there is no

certainty of there being one correct way (Bowen 1993: 22–5). As discussed earlier, the relationship between these two groups clearly defies common categorizations and understandings of the ‘modernist’ and ‘traditionalist’ labels — with modernists often occupying a more scripturalist position and traditionalists embracing a wider range of teachings and practices.

Modernist Islam took organizational form in Indonesia with the establishment of Muhammadiyah by K.H. Achmad Dahlan (1868–1923) in November 1912, followed by the Union for Reformation and Guidance (Al-Irsyad) in 1915 and Persis in 1923. Muhammadiyah began as a local Yogyakarta-based organization but within ten years had spread across the nation. In time it came to be the pre-eminent vehicle for modernist Islam. Primarily living in urban centres, Muhammadiyah members have tended to be young professionals or intellectuals, attracted by the organization’s emphasis on education and its calls for progress and ‘modernization’.¹⁴

Traditionalist Muslims viewed the development of reformist/modernist Islam, and especially the establishment of Muhammadiyah, as a threat to the core beliefs and practices that made up the fabric of their religious life. When analysing the crux of the conflict between modernists and traditionalists, most scholars, NU and non-NU alike, focus on issues of *khilafiyah* — contentious legal matters on which the opinion of the *ulama* is divided — in particular, the social and religious rituals and customs practised by traditionalists but banned by modernists. These traditions include the recitation of ritualized prayers for the dead (*tahlilan*),¹⁵ the practice of visiting and praying at the grave of a parent or holy person (*ziarah*)¹⁶ and the method of expressing intent (*ushalli*) before beginning one’s prayers.¹⁷ Modernist Muslims claim that practices such as these are not taught in the Qur’an, and that by sacralizing that which is only local custom or even pre-Islamic ritual, traditionalists are committing sacrilege (*bid’ah*). Traditionalists in turn accuse the modernists of sacrilege because they do *not* practice these spiritual acts, which they insist are required of Muslims. Another common cause of conflict cited by Muslim scholars on both sides of the fence is the issue of *taqlid* versus *ijtihad*, mentioned earlier.

Although most scholars turn to these religious and ritualistic differences to explain the tensions between modernists and traditionalists, it is also important to remember the deep sociological and cultural gulf between the primarily rural-dwelling traditionalist agriculturalists, tied to the politics of land ownership and tenure, and the largely urban-dwelling modernist

intellectuals, professionals and bureaucrats. These sociological divisions have historically become intertwined with, and mutually constitutive of, the differing doctrinal emphases of the two groups. The socially conservative roots of land-owning, inland Javanese Muslims often led to close association with the 'traditional' religious bureaucracy and aristocratic elites. The more urban-centred, coastal Muslims, meanwhile, had less interest in preserving these elite structures and became more theologically 'purist' and reformist. As mentioned earlier, colonial articulations of a marginal, shallow Islamic element layered over an authentic, non-Islamic Indonesian essence derived from the country's Hindu-Buddhist past reinforced and reproduced these sociological and historical divisions. Thus, doctrinal plus sociological and economic differences have served to solidify the academic and religious distinctions between traditionalist and modernist Islam.

Economic and material conflict is especially important to understanding relations between traditionalists and modernists. Fealy (1998) makes the important point that during the 1910s, the religious and ritualistic differences between the two groups were actually dealt with quite amicably; it was not until the 1920s, and the emergence of more material issues, that the relationship began to deteriorate. In the early 1920s the modernists sharpened their criticism of the *kiai*, challenging the culture of *kiai* infallibility and undermining their authority. At the same time modernists were making inroads into the Central and East Javanese towns that until then had been the domain of the traditionalists, eroding the latter's financial bases by recruiting middle-class Muslim traders and landowners on whom the *kiai* relied for the subsistence of their *pesantren* (Fealy 1998: 25). Thus, while religious and ritualistic issues were certainly the substance of the contention between modernists and traditionalists, the contention itself did not become hostile until material and territorial issues came into play.

The Role of Local and International Events in NU's Formation

The events leading to the formation of NU lend credence to the argument that the motivation for its establishment was primarily political rather than religious. In 1922¹⁸ the first Al-Islam Congress was held in Cirebon, West Java, in an attempt to resolve some of the religious differences that were then dividing the Muslim community (*umat Islam*). This goal was

not achieved, with modernists and traditionalists differing sharply on issues such as *taqlid* versus *ijtihad*. Modernist representatives accused traditionalists of blindly following outdated teachings; traditionalists responded in kind, saying that the *ulama* of Indonesia were not qualified to conduct *ijtihad* because their facility in Arabic was weak, because they had inadequate reference materials and because they had not developed a satisfactory analytical methodology. The traditionalist representatives, notably KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah of Surabaya and KH Asnawi of Kudus, left the congress feeling that the gulf between themselves and the modernists was wider than ever.¹⁹

A second Al-Islam Congress was held in 1923, but it was boycotted by the traditionalist representatives in anger over their treatment at the first congress. This allowed the modernists to set the agenda and take the lead organizationally. The 1924 Al-Islam Congress, held in Surabaya, achieved a compromise between the two groups on the issue that had been one of the main sticking points at the first congress, that of *taqlid* versus *ijtihad*. Participants agreed on a detailed description of the qualifications an *ulama* must possess in order to conduct *ijtihad*, and issued a statement saying that Muhammadiyah and Al-Irsyad did not consider themselves to be Wahhabi organizations and did not reject the tradition of the *mazhab* (Haidar 1998: 52–4). This appeased the traditionalists considerably, given their concern that the rise of Wahhabism would lead to restrictions on their religious practices and adherence to the *mazhab*.

In spite of this important lessening of doctrinal differences, international circumstances and political issues were to keep the modernist–traditionalist conflict alive. In 1925, King Ibn Sa‘ud came to power in Saudi Arabia, bringing with him Wahhabism as the official state religion. In an effort to consolidate his power as the supreme Islamic leader in the Hijaz, he announced a World Islamic Congress to be held in Mecca in 1926. The traditionalists wanted representation on the Indonesian delegation to Mecca so that they could petition Ibn Sa‘ud not to restrict traditionalist practices and to continue to permit dissemination of the teachings of the four *mazhab*. But when the 1925 Al-Islam Congress selected its delegation, not only did it *not* include traditionalist Muslims, but it also declined to present the traditionalists’ agenda to Ibn Sa‘ud.²⁰

This spurred the traditionalist *ulama* to organize themselves. Under the leadership of KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah (1888–1971), they formed their own Hijaz Committee (Komite Hijaz) charged with appointing a

separate delegation to travel to Mecca.²¹ With no formal organization for this delegation to represent, the committee formed Nahdlatul Ulama (at the time rendered Nahdlatul Oelama) to give their delegates institutional backing and strengthen their petition to Ibn Sa'ud.²² Thus, the birth of NU itself appeared to be almost an afterthought — a strategy to increase the leverage of the delegation to Mecca — and directly related to the theological conflict between the modernists and traditionalists in Indonesia.

In spite of the last-minute nature of the formation itself, NU's founding fathers were quick to establish a fairly extensive network and elaborate organizational structure. NU's structure followed that of the Dutch colonial administration in having a set of provincial and district offices — *Pengurus Wilayah NU* (PWNU) and *Pengurus Cabang NU* (PCNU) — with each level presided over by a locally elected, but centrally approved, religious council and administrative council. The original Executive Board of NU (PBNU) was made up of three bodies: a Supreme Council (*Syuriah*) consisting of 20 *kiai*; an Administrative Council (*Tanfidziyah*) with 19 members; and a seven-member Advisory Council (*Mustasyar*) assisting the *Syuriah*.²³ NU's founders intended the *Syuriah* to be the highest, most authoritative body, responsible for formulating policy and given the final say in all major decision making. The head of the *Syuriah* was therefore given the title *rais am* (president general). The *Tanfidziyah* was to be an administrative body responsible for the daily running of NU, and was required to seek *Syuriah* approval on all matters of import. Its head was given the title *ketua umum* (chair). Very little has been written about the group of very senior *ulama* who make up the *Mustasyar*. However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the *Mustasyar* functioned as a highly prestigious body that was only marginally involved in day-to-day organizational matters.

KH Hasyim Asy'ari was appointed to the highest position in the first *Syuriah*, while Hasan Gipo, who was not an *ulama*, was named head of the first *Tanfidziyah* (Suprpto 1987: 39–42).²⁴ Van Bruinessen (1996: 39) notes that this dual leadership structure reflected an inherent weakness in NU right from the beginning that would become a recurring source of conflict. Because NU, especially at the start, consisted almost entirely of *ulama*, it lacked a cadre of professional administrators to manage its daily affairs, and was therefore forced to recruit 'outsiders' to fill these positions. Very often the views of these outsiders were quite different from those of the *ulama* with whom they were ostensibly working in partnership, leading to conflict between them. This conflict between the *ulama* and the

politicians has repeated itself in varying forms throughout NU's history, and is a central element of the Khittah '26 discourse.

The Historiography of NU's Origins

After the fact, and especially in the context of the post-1984 Khittah '26 movement, a great deal of discussion and debate has been generated about the true purpose of the original establishment of NU. Most NU scholarship since 1984 describes the main motivations as being religious and social — to maintain and protect the *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*.

Ahlusunnah wal jamaah literally means 'those who follow the Sunnah', and is generally used throughout the Muslim world to differentiate Sunnis from Shi'ites. In Indonesia, however, the term is used more specifically to refer to those who follow the four *mazhab* from the classical era (Fealy 1998: 29; Haidar 1998: 64–9). By using it in this way in its constitution and subsequent documents and publications, NU effectively appropriated the term as a means of differentiating itself from modernist Muslims.²⁵

Descriptions of the social activities that NU has always devoted itself to are a central element of the story of NU's birth, as is an emphasis on the religious motivation for it. However, the political element of NU's formation is usually glossed over, if not denied outright. This is especially apparent in the work of Choirul Anam. Anam (1999) is still cited as one of the key sources on NU history by an NU author, but Choirul himself was a strong proponent of Khittah '26, and not unbiased. He finds three motivating factors for NU's establishment: a religious motivation, referring to the need to counter Christianization and the influence of the Dutch; a desire to build nationalism (although under this misleadingly political heading he primarily discusses the conflict between traditionalists and modernists); and a desire to promote the *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* (Anam 1999: 18–60). Similarly Suprpto (1987) finds two motivations for the formation of NU: a religious motivation, related primarily to the desire to preserve and promote the *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*; and a social motivation, under which he places NU's role in opposing the Dutch. He concludes by saying firmly: 'Thus it is clear that NU is a religious organization which was established with a religious motivation, with a religious purpose and using religious methods' (Suprpto 1987: 35).

This insistence on a religious and social (as opposed to political) identity for NU at the time of its establishment is further reinforced by the

striking absence of a stated political agenda in the original constitution and founding documents of NU. Anam (1999: 18–9) commences his chapter on the motivating factors behind NU's establishment by quoting the opening paragraph of NU's first constitution:

The purpose for NU's formation is as follows: to establish communication among the *ulama* who follow the four *mazhab*; to examine the classical texts (*kitab kuning*) that are being taught in order to differentiate between those that are *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* and those that are innovations (*ahli bidah*); to promote the spread of Islam based on the *mazhab* in any permitted fashion; to increase the number of Islamic schools (*madrasah*) based on Islam; to attend to issues pertaining to mosques and Islamic schools; to attend to the needs of orphans and the poor; and to establish institutions to manage farming and fishing concerns that are not forbidden by the laws of Islam.

While acknowledging that NU's original interests included issues of economic development, Anam (1999: 139) is clear that in his view NU was not originally a political organization, though it later 'changed its orientation' and went so far as to become a political party. Van Bruinessen (1996: 42) has also commented on the fact that the international circumstances in which NU was established, which he sees as being the most direct causative factor in its formation, were not even mentioned in NU's first constitution.

While the original constitution makes no mention of it, and post-1984 writings gloss over it, some pre- and early New Order scholars do allude to a political purpose and role for NU. Mawardi (1967: 18), for example, asserts that NU's founding fathers did not want NU to be like Sarekat Islam, primarily political in orientation and without any true focus on religious issues, but at the same time did not want it to be a purely religious and apolitical organization like Muhammadiyah, because they disapproved of Muhammadiyah's practice of accepting subsidies and support from the Dutch. In the end:

[they] took a middle road incorporating both elements. Basically Nahdlatul Ulama emphasizes attention to religious teaching and education. Nevertheless, it was also necessary to instil patriotism in the *santri*, as well as hatred of all forms of oppression by the Dutch (Mawardi 1967: 18).

The fact that NU was a political party at the time — and Mawardi a politician — no doubt enabled Mawardi to be more frank about the political elements of NU's identity at the time of its birth than might otherwise have been the case. Nevertheless, other early accounts also

written while NU was a political party find it more difficult to ascribe a political label to NU. Thus, for example, Aboebakar (1957: 477) repeats the time-honoured deflection of the stigma of the political by placing NU's political activities (protesting against certain taxes, establishing militias, developing foreign relations with other Muslim nations) under a 'social' heading.²⁶ He writes:

As is evident from its constitution, Nahdlatul Ulama was established purely as a religious and social organization, not involving itself in matters of national politics unless they were related to Islam. This was not done accidentally, but rather for certain reasons (Aboebakar 1957: 480).

These reasons were: (1) that due to the colonial oppression of the Dutch, the capacity to become involved in politics was highly restricted; (2) that it was felt that political activity would obstruct efforts to unify the *umat Islam*, a priority at the time; and (3) that NU *ulama* had little training or background in national politics, so were hesitant to take on a political role.

Thus both early and later explorations of NU's origins tend to downplay any political motivation for forming NU. At the same time, most retellings of the story are not framed as part of a theological battle between modernists and traditionalists, but focus rather on the traditions and rituals that NU was formed to protect. Some scholars go so far as to deny that NU was formed in reaction to modernist Islam in Indonesia (Anam 1999: 59). This line of argumentation relies heavily on a patriotic nationalism ascribed retrospectively to NU, in the shape of resistance to Dutch colonialism. A short history of NU prepared in honour of the organization's 40th birthday, for example, states forthrightly that 'our *ulama* took a very strict position of refusal to work together with the Dutch colonial government, and we carried out total "non-cooperation"' (PBNU 1966: 42). It further declares that:

... it cannot be denied that the role and contribution of our *ulama* to the struggle for independence and revolution was very important. It could even be said here, that the *ulama* were the primary teachers of the Indonesian revolution. Without the *ulama*, the Indonesian revolution would certainly have failed (PBNU 1966: 42–3).

The writers provide a list of nine concrete contributions that NU made to the revolutionary movement, including forbidding NU youth to join Dutch militias, banning donations of blood to the Dutch military, rejecting

monetary subsidies offered by the Dutch and joining other Muslim nations in protesting the Balfour Declaration (PBBNU 1966: 52).

Anam (1999) also provides support for the view that nationalist fervour played a part in NU's origins. He recounts a conversation between KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and KH Abdul Halim on the day before NU's formation in which the latter asked the former whether his plans included an intention for the new organization to demand independence. Wahab answered: 'Of course — that is the first condition, the Muslim believers must head down that path. The body of believers will not spread until this nation is free' (Anam 1999: 36). Abdul Halim then expressed some doubt as to whether the organization would be capable of achieving such a high goal. Wahab dramatically struck a match and, before lighting his cigarette with it, held it up and said, 'This [organization] can crush the institutions of war. We must not lose hope. We must believe that we will achieve independence' (Anam 1999: 36). Anam concludes that the birth of NU was driven by a spirit of nationalism.

In short, while claiming patriotic nationalism as a motivating factor, most of the authors discussed above maintain that NU was *not* a political organization at birth. Mawardi (1967: 16), whose denials of any political motivation were noted above, argues that NU's *pesantren*-based culture was conducive to mobilization for resistance purposes — that the *kiai* built *pesantren* as a haven from the Dutch where they could inculcate the *santri* with a spirit of resistance and opposition. According to him, the participation of NU *kiai* in the Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence (Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia) in mid 1945 and the involvement of NU youth in guerrilla groups such as Hisbullah marked a new era for NU, in that the *ulama* began to acquaint themselves with the world of politics (Mawardi 1967: 24). Zuhri (1974: 58–60), too, paints a picture of the *santri* in his *pesantren* frequently sitting around discussing topics like imperialism, colonialism and non-cooperation, and confirms that NU *pesantren* by and large refused subsidies from the Dutch.

Other scholars have pointed out that these claims to an oppositional patriotism must be looked at somewhat sceptically. Feillard (1999a) notes that there is no mention of independence as an objective of NU in its original constitution, but that later NU historiography has inserted it as a primary founding principle. She further argues that, with the exception of NU's fairly firm stance with the colonial administration on matters of religion, the general relationship between NU and the Dutch was one of

mutual respect. She points out that in 1938 NU declared the Netherlands to be *dar-al Islam*, that is, a land whose ruler and laws are considered acceptable to Muslims (Feillard 1999a: 16–8). Van Bruinessen (1994: 45) states that up until 1942, NU's stance towards the Dutch was one of extreme accommodationism. Benda (1958: 216, n. 59) notes that as late as 1940, NU would not allow its own youth organization, Ansor, to join a federation of youth organizations called Persipi until the latter had deleted the goal of Indonesian nationalism from its statutes.

NU's policy of accommodation with the political leadership at certain times in its history has been remarked upon extensively by others, and is not the central point here.²⁷ Suffice it to say that NU's relationship with the Dutch, like its relationship with all subsequent holders of political power, was marked by characteristic incoherence. While certain individuals within the NU leadership were strongly nationalistic, and while it seems likely that many *pesantren* were indeed breeding grounds for resistance, NU's official policy towards the Dutch could hardly be called oppositional, and retroactive efforts to insert oppositionality into NU's original founding principles appear to be highly reconstructive.

THE CONFLICT WITH MASYUMI

NU made up for its relatively late arrival on the scene in Indonesia by expanding swiftly throughout Java and Madura, and establishing strongholds in South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and Sumatra. Its first Mukhtar, held in October 1926, was attended by 93 *kiai* and dealt primarily with issues pertaining to the four *mazhab* (Anam 1999: 80). Its fourth Mukhtar, held in 1929, attracted 1,450 participants.²⁸ By 1929 NU had established branches in 62 districts, and by 1938 it was represented in 99 districts (Haidar 1998: 85). The subjects discussed at its national congresses were still overwhelmingly related to religious matters, though by 1929 participants were also discussing economic ventures such as cooperatives and, according to Anam (1999: 75–93), matters relating to the government, though he does not provide details.

Modernist and Traditionalist Rapprochement

During the 1930s, the hostility between modernists and traditionalists that had enflamed the 1920s began to abate. Benda (1958: 51–3, 76) cites four

factors that he believes contributed to this rapprochement: (1) the heat of the religious conflict between the two groups declined as the influence of Wahhabism weakened both internationally and within Indonesia; (2) NU and Muhammadiyah closed ranks in opposition to the increasingly extreme religious and political positions of Sarekat Islam; (3) NU and Muhammadiyah also found common ground in opposing an emerging secular nationalism; and (4) in the 1930s the Dutch colonial government relaxed its attitude towards the modernists, allowing tensions due to perceived favouritism of the traditionalists to abate.

By 1937, relations had improved to the extent that modernist and traditionalist leaders were able to come together institutionally in the Supreme Council of Indonesian Muslims (MIAI), an umbrella group of Muslim organizations formed in September 1937. This move was initiated by Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and Achmad Dachlan Kebondalem of NU, Mas Mansur of Muhammadiyah and W. Wondoamiseno of Sarekat Islam (Fealy 1998: 39). The purpose of MIAI was to promote unity and cooperation among the *umat Islam*. Numerous scholars have noted that NU's political identity and activism began to emerge visibly in the late 1930s, one sign being its involvement in MIAI.²⁹

The Japanese occupation of Indonesia in 1942 was to prove crucial to the political mobilization of Indonesian Islam. The Japanese, unlike the Dutch, actively recruited Muslim leaders to assist the administration. While it has been argued that their attention to Islam was more a matter of appearance and strategy than a substantial departure from the Dutch policy of ruling through the *priyayi*, for the first time Muslim leaders were placed in positions of responsibility on a wider scale and given authority over administrative institutions created by the Japanese.³⁰

The occupying forces placed three Japanese officials on the board of MIAI, and succeeded in having its stated purpose altered to 'securing a proper place for Islam within Indonesian society' and 'harmonizing Indonesian Islam with the requirements of the changing times' (Benda 1958: 142). In November 1943, the Japanese replaced MIAI with Masyumi, whose single purpose was tellingly different: that of 'strengthening the unity of all Islamic organizations' and 'aiding Dai Nippon in the interests of Greater East Asia' (Benda 1958: 150). This marked a victory for the Japanese, who in one fell swoop were able to disband a large group of varied Muslim organizations nursing anti-colonial sentiments and put in their place a Japanese-regulated organization consisting only of Muhammadiyah, NU

and two small traditionalist groups, thus effectively silencing the more radical elements in MIAI (Benda 1958: 151).³¹ KH Hasyim Asy'ari of NU was named chair of Masyumi. His son, KH Wahid Hasyim, shared the post of deputy chair with Mas Mansoer until the latter resigned in 1944, leaving the daily leadership and actual running of Masyumi to Hasyim. Four NU officers and four Muhammadiyah officers served as executive advisors (Benda 1958: 262, n. 6).

NU's leaders, though perhaps lacking in political experience, were under no illusions as to the regulative intentions of the Japanese in forming Masyumi. Saifuddin Zuhri provides a revealing account of KH Hasyim Asy'ari's reaction to the establishment of Masyumi: 'It's called Masyumi. It sounds like a Japanese word, so they'll be happy. Never mind, what's in a name?' (1974: 186–88). When Zuhri asked his mentor what the purpose of Masyumi would be, Hasyim explained that the Japanese *thought* it was to galvanize the *umat Islam* to assist them to achieve 'their' victory — but what the Japanese did not know was that the 'they' Masyumi leaders were referring to were actually the Indonesian Muslim groups, not the Japanese. 'So we're going to help the Japanese?', asked Zuhri. Hasyim replied that NU and other Muslim groups were going to make the Japanese think that the Muslims were working in their interests, while using the infrastructure of Masyumi to strengthen their own position. 'Are we capable of fooling the Japanese?', asked Zuhri. In a reply worthy of any good politician, Hasyim said: 'Don't forget, the Prophet once said *Al-harbu khidah*, "In war there will always be deception". We live in a time of war, no? In war there is always one certainty: kill or be killed, trick or be tricked ... We simply have to choose which one it will be'.³²

When it became clear at the end of World War II that Indonesia would now have to fight a war of independence against the Dutch, NU cast off its accommodationist stance and took an active part in the revolution. NU was active in the guerrilla group Hisbullah, led by NU *kiai* Zainul Arifin, and in Sabilillah.³³ In October 1945, NU *ulama* met in Surabaya to issue their famed Jihad Resolution (Resolusi Jihad) declaring the war against the Dutch to be a holy war.³⁴ There were often conflicts and differences of opinion between the NU *ulama* and the modernists in Masyumi at this time, but they put their differences aside and maintained solidarity in the face of the larger threat from the Dutch.

The Birth of Masyumi as a Political Party

On 17 August 1945, the Indonesian Declaration of Independence was proclaimed. In November, Masyumi declared itself a political party. Its leadership was divided between an Executive Board (Pengurus Besar) and an Advisory Council (Majelis Syuro).

There are differing opinions about the importance of NU's role in the early party leadership. According to van Bruinessen (1994: 62), NU was not well represented in the leadership, holding only one position on the Executive Board (KH Maskyur, representing Hisbullah) and three positions on the Advisory Council. Ida (1996: 18) disagrees, finding that NU was accorded several positions of honour, such as the chair of the Advisory Council (held by KH Hasyim Asy'ari), one of three deputy chairs (held by KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah) and the chair of the Defence Council (held by KH Wahid Hasyim). Anam (1999: 133–4), too, says that NU dominated the Advisory Council. He notes changes in the structure of Masyumi in 1946 to create an additional advisory body within the Executive Board, the Party Leadership Council (Dewan Pimpinan Partai), which was to be responsible for determining guidelines and policy for the party. Through its role on the Advisory Council and Party Leadership Council, NU was able not only to participate, but actually to be instrumental, in setting the direction and leadership of the party.

Thus, in the beginning, NU's leaders felt that they had considerable influence within Masyumi, and urged NU members at all levels to support the party politically. It is 'very likely', Anam (1999: 134) asserts, that this grassroots support was responsible for Masyumi's speedy growth into one of the largest political parties in the nation. Kahin (1952: 157) also says that it was due to the support of 'nonpolitical Moslem social organizations' and particularly 'village religious leaders' — both most probably referring to NU — that Masyumi was able to gain its mass backing so quickly.

Conflict Emerges

It did not take long, however, for the inherent divisions within Masyumi to manifest themselves along traditionalist/modernist lines. Part of the problem was ideological. Kahin (1952: 157) notes that one of Masyumi's

main aims, second only to national independence, was 'the organization of the state according to Islamic principles'. The modernist-traditionalist conflict was also a cross-cultural one, between what Feith (1962: 24-5) calls the 'administrators' (men with by and large Western educations, possessing technical and professional skills, and urban and 'modern' in orientation) and the 'solidarity makers' ('traditional or charismatic' leaders who could mobilize vast segments of the population, and who had deep and extensive grassroots support). These divisions were not identical to the traditionalist-modernist divide, as Feith himself says, but there was a close correspondence (Feith 1962: 137). While NU's ability to contribute highly skilled martial arts practitioners to guerrilla units and mobilize large networks of popular grassroots support was valuable during the revolution, its lack of a professional cadre of politicians, economists and technocrats needed for the monumental task of nation building became glaringly obvious. According to the traditionalists, Masyumi's modernist administrators began to make it plain that they thought the *ulama* were not as capable as they were at managing political affairs, and should be restricted to dealing with religious affairs. For NU leaders used to receiving respect and veneration from their own religious community, this perceived disparagement hit hard.³⁵

The *ulama* in turn were critical of the modernists for being too Western oriented and lacking in piety. Wahid Hasyim recounts a story of a Masyumi meeting at which an NU *ulama* suggested a recess for prayers shortly after the chairman, a modernist, had arrived. The chairman became angry, saying that the issues being discussed were more important than prayers. The next day the *ulama* concerned withdrew from Masyumi and began to campaign against the party on the grounds that its leadership lacked piety (Hasyim 1985: 124).

Meanwhile, leadership factions that reflected these cultural rifts were emerging within Masyumi. The two opposing groups were led by Sukiman Wirjosandjojo and Mohammad Natsir. Fealy (1998: 79-80) talks of a 'cultural, generational and ideological cleavage', with Sukiman's faction representing the older Javanese generation who were close to Soekarno, and Natsir's group composed of younger revolutionaries supported mainly by non-Javanese. Although both Natsir and Sukiman were modernists, NU was firmly allied with the Sukiman faction for many reasons. The primary one was Sukiman's East Javanese origins, which meant that culturally (and often literally) they spoke the same language. The issue of

respect for the *ulama's* religious authority also played into the rift. Natsir was one of a new breed of modernist Muslims who had had training in Islamic jurisprudence and thought, and thus was capable of countering the *ulama* on their own turf with respect to matters of Islamic interpretation. Sukiman, on the other hand, was content to defer to the *ulama* when it came to religious matters (Noer 2000: 94–6). The NU *ulama* therefore tended to respond more favourably to Sukiman and his generation of modernists, who they felt accorded them the respect they deserved.

Several small skirmishes took place between NU and the modernists in Masyumi in the late 1940s. One concerned the 1946 Linggajati and 1948 Renville Agreements — both negotiated settlements with the Dutch recognizing victories that gave the Dutch control over increasingly large areas of Indonesia, and both strongly opposed by NU leaders.³⁶ Marijan (1992: 61) cites the disagreement surrounding the Linggajati Agreement as exposing the first visible signs of division within Masyumi. NU's leaders violently opposed the agreement, arguing that it ceded too much control to the Dutch, while modernist leaders such as Roem and Natsir supported it, arguing that it represented a de facto acknowledgement by the Dutch of the Republic of Indonesia.³⁷ When the newly appointed prime minister, Muhammad Hatta, offered Masyumi a place in his cabinet in early 1948, modernists wanted to reject the offer because it would mean implementing the Renville Agreement and thus ceding even more land to the Dutch, while in this instance NU's leaders, especially KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, wanted to accept it because the agreement had already been signed, so the only way to hinder its implementation would be from within the government (Zuhri 1974: 230; Anam 1999: 234). In the latter case the modernists prevailed, and Masyumi withdrew from cabinet ahead of the Renville Agreement. Because of the divisions within Masyumi over these and other issues, in May 1947 NU formed a Political Bureau (Biro Politik NU) charged with dealing with such conflicts. However, increased aggression by the Dutch in 1948 caused its leaders to shelve their intended confrontation with the modernist leaders in the interests of solidarity against the Dutch (Anam 1999: 136).

These mounting conflicts and tensions came to a head at Masyumi's 14th National Congress in December 1949, in what was to be a turning point for NU–Masyumi relations. Natsir was elected chair of the party at that congress, while Sukiman was given the less powerful position of president. Natsir's group also took a majority of the seats on the Party

Leadership Council (Fealy 1998: 81; Noer 2000: 108–9). In addition, a decision was made to restructure the leadership councils, specifically to restrict the role of the Advisory Council to religious matters only. This was ostensibly done to improve the efficiency of decision making, but the NU *kiai* took it as an implicit message that they were not thought capable of performing in the world of politics — a point with which they strongly disagreed (Marijan 1992: 65; Fealy 1998: 81). Finally, a proposal by NU to restructure the party's dual membership system was rejected by the congress. NU leaders had long complained that the system was unfair in giving individual members and organizational members equal voting rights. They argued that organizational members representing thousands of people (that is, NU) should have a stronger voice than individual members (Fealy 1998: 81; Haidar 1998: 104). To resolve this problem, they proposed that Masyumi should become a federation of organizations. However, this proposal was rejected by the congress due to fears that a federation would be too slow and clumsy, and would merely become a conflict zone among organizations (Noer 2000: 56).

According to Fealy (1998: 83), relations between Masyumi and NU never recovered from these blows. At its 1950 Mukhtar, NU decided to withdraw from Masyumi, but to delay the implementation of this decision in order to give Masyumi a chance to make the changes it was asking for.³⁸ In 1951, NU formed a Politics Advisory Council (Majelis Pertimbangan Politik) to begin developing plans for NU to become a political party in its own right (Fealy 1998: 83).

The final straw for NU came with the retraction, upon the formation of the Wilopo cabinet in 1952, of the ministerial position in the Department of Religion NU had occupied in the previous three cabinets (Haidar 1998: 109). The minister at the time, KH Wahid Hasyim, had announced that he would not accept renomination amidst criticism that he had mismanaged the *hajj* pilgrimage program (Fealy 1998: 84). Muhammadiyah's leaders took advantage of the lack of a strong candidate from NU to claim that it was their 'turn' to hold the religious affairs portfolio. But for NU, this was a position of vital importance. For one thing, if NU lacked the professional and political cadre to provide senior leadership in the new government, it did at least possess the expertise to run the Department of Religion. To have that position taken from it was a humiliation that left deep scars (Haidar 1998: 109). Second, the Department of Religion was an important tool for determining government policy on religion, as well

as for managing religious education, overseeing the implementation of marriage and family law in the religious courts, and generally influencing religious thought and practice at all levels throughout the nation (Madinier and Feillard 1999: 8). Finally, the Department of Religion was an important source of patronage, funding and contracts that could be funnelled to NU supporters, and as such was important to NU both politically and economically (Fealy 1998: 85).

In spite of this apparent heaping of insults, the decision to withdraw from Masyumi was not one that was taken easily or lightly. KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, then chair of Masyumi's Advisory Council and *rais am* of the Syuriah, was the primary motor behind the move to secede.³⁹ As Masyumi leaders began discussions about replacing the Sukiman cabinet with the Wilopo cabinet, Wahab took a series of brazen steps to force Masyumi to accept his demands or face the secession of NU from the party. These included meeting personally with President Soekarno;⁴⁰ sending a series of personal letters to key decision makers within the party; releasing statements to the press revealing the deep divisions within Masyumi; and undermining the position of Natsir's group within the as yet unformed cabinet (Fealy 1998: 86–7). He took many of these steps without consulting the PBNU or the Syuriah leadership. But while this created some internal unsettlement and dissent, ultimately this did not cause him serious harm (Fealy 1998: 88–91).

The announcement on 2 April 1952 of the Wilopo cabinet with Muhammadiyah's Faqih Usman as minister of religion resulted in quick and emphatic action on the part of NU. The PBNU met on 5–6 April and released a decision to withdraw from Masyumi. This was debated at NU's 19th Mukhtar in Palembang at the end of the month. After heated debate, the decision to withdraw was ratified by a vote of 61 to nine, with seven abstentions.⁴¹

There is a wide range of opinion as to the 'true' cause of NU's decision to withdraw from Masyumi. Non-NU scholars tend to portray it in terms of issues of political power and position. Dhofier (1984, cited in Marijan 1992: 70) argues that it was about lack of opportunity within Masyumi for NU's young, upwardly mobile politicians, while Noer (2000: 92) says that it was about the Department of Religion ministership. NU and NU-affiliated scholars, however, tend to portray it as a matter of pride and principle. Anam (1999: 244) rejects the conclusion that it was about the ministership, describing this as merely the last straw; he argues that it was

more about NU's intense frustration at being increasingly marginalized within the party. Not only was NU's role restricted to that of 'advisor' (*penasehat*), he complains, but the Masyumi leadership did not attend to or follow NU's advice. Zuhri (1974, cited in Suprpto 1987: 60) similarly sees the primary reasons for NU's departure as lying in the lack of attention paid to the religious edicts (*fatwa*) of the Advisory Council, and the structural marginalization of NU within Masyumi. Marijan (1992: 70) points to disappointment over the restriction of NU *kiai* to issues of religion alone.

NU leader Idham Chalid seems to epitomize the prevailing thinking among the NU leadership both then and now when he claims that the split between NU and Masyumi was the outward manifestation of a larger perception of lack of respect and honour for the *ulama* among modernist Muslims. Tracing the cause back to the 'Western education' many modernist leaders had received at Dutch primary and secondary schools, he says:

Actually it's not about the [ministership] ... Rather, it's about principle ... A graduate of [a Dutch school] views a graduate of [an Islamic school] as lower than [him]. This is painful to *santri* like me and you. It used to be that people like that would sit to show respect for the *ulama*. Now a graduate of [a Dutch school] will talk to Kyai Wahab with his hands on his hips, because he thinks he is better than [him] (quoted in Noer 2000: 93).⁴²

Zainul Arifin, who represented NU on Masyumi's first Executive Board, also says that NU left the party because of the lack of respect accorded to the *ulama*:

But this *Madjlis Sjura* [Majelis Syuro], which was predominantly occupied by our *ulama*, was used as a jewelled ring, worn only for going to feasts, and locked in the drawer when these feasts were finished. Since then, *Madjlis Sjura* had never been invited to discuss matters related to the steps that were to be taken by the Masjumi [Masyumi], despite the fact that actually our *ulama* had and have enough skill and tact for these matters. Such had been proven in the Madiun Congress, March 1947, when our *ulama* worked and sweated to resolve and analyze problems directly connected with politics, national and international. Nevertheless, all the resolutions which were then submitted to the Masjumi were ignored and forgotten (quoted in Naim 1961: 12).

There can be no doubt that the loss of tangible markers of power — the loss of the ministership, the structural marginalization of the Advisory Council and so on — contributed to NU's decision to leave Masyumi.

But my sense, both from the accounts of the time and from the way NU members discuss that era now, is that the modernist leaders' derision of NU and low esteem for the *ulama* ultimately became intolerable, and are remembered with great bitterness even now.

NU AS A POLITICAL PARTY

Secession was not the only important matter discussed at the Palembang Mukhtar in April 1952. Even more heated, according to Fealy (1998: 97), was the debate over whether NU should become a political party. Representing the anti-party stance, KH Wahid Hasyim issued stern warnings about the dangers of politics distracting members from their religious and social duties. On the other side of the debate, KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah argued that politics could not be separated from Islam, saying, 'Islam and politics are as inseparable as sugar and sweetness' (quoted in Fealy 1998: 99). The congress finally appointed a committee consisting of three pro-party members, three anti-party members and one neutral member to study the issue. In July 1952, when it became clear that Masyumi would not accede to NU's requests, NU formally withdrew from Masyumi. NU's parliamentarians first took their place in parliament as part of the newly formed NU faction on 17 September 1952.⁴³

The new party faced formidable challenges, not the least of which was its lack of a professional, politically educated cadre to fill party posts. Indeed, Feillard (1999a: 46) remarks that NU was 'very brave' to form a party under such circumstances. The structure of the party remained the same as that of the organization, with its constitution emphasizing that the Syuriah was the highest body in the party, and the Tanfidziyah the 'implementing body'.⁴⁴

Another challenge facing the party was its relationship with Masyumi. Masyumi had not expected NU to actually withdraw; when it did, causing Masyumi to lose its status as the largest party in parliament, there was surprise and bitterness. The NU narrative is that an antagonistic attitude on the part of Masyumi, as evidenced by comments made publicly by Masyumi leader Jusuf Wibisono, 'forced' NU to take an anti-Masyumi stance:

Masyumi's 'iron-hand' tactics towards NU brought about not a few problems for NU. To deal with this attack from Masyumi, NU was forced to begin an

‘anti-intellectual’ campaign against those who didn’t understand Islamic law, and who had never practised Islamic teachings, but who were leaders of Masyumi (Mawardi 1967: 31).

This quote reflects not only the hostility felt by NU at the time, but also the way in which the conflict was framed as being about Islam — it reveals NU’s bitterness at being derided by ‘intellectuals’ who did not understand or practise Islamic law. NU therefore set out a strategy for gaining political power, one that was coloured at every level by a desire to punish Masyumi. Its first step, according to Mawardi (1967: 31), was to gain positions in the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet (July 1953 – July 1955) ‘in order to strengthen NU’s position within the political landscape, *and to obtain political backing to counter the political offensive from Masyumi*’ (emphasis added).

Another central element of NU’s strategy was to distinguish itself from Masyumi by emphasizing NU’s Islamic essence and character. For example, in a statement of its political platform released in 1954, NU explicitly noted that its purpose was to ‘firmly establish the *shari’a* according to one of the four schools of law’ (Madinier and Feillard 1999: 15), while Masyumi declined to mention particular theological creeds in its political platform. Again, both NU and Masyumi called for a bicameral assembly, but NU insisted that members of the higher chamber should be qualified to arbitrate on matters of Islamic law. This would have resulted in a higher chamber dominated by *ulama*, and presumably functioning much like NU’s own Syuriah. Finally, NU insisted that the president and all ministers ‘except those who do not have direct responsibility in a spiritual field’ be Muslims, while Masyumi did not explicitly include such a condition in its platform (Madinier and Feillard 1999: 16). Thus, in its early years NU presented itself as a much more Islamically oriented party than did Masyumi — and in fact championed the kind of ‘political Islam’ agenda that it was later to vigorously oppose.

NU’s embrace of a politicized Islamic identity began to change during the lead-up to the 1955 elections. In late 1953, NU abandoned an Islam-based alliance with Masyumi to join the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) and the Greater United Party (PIR) in the first Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet. This evidence of what Feith has called ‘changing alignments’ involved protracted negotiations between PNI, PIR, NU and Masyumi, and was ultimately arrived at only when PIR agreed to give NU the four cabinet positions earmarked for Masyumi. Masyumi viewed this as a great betrayal, claiming that NU had only hours before promised to reject involvement in

any cabinet that did not include Masyumi (Feith 1962: 233–46). According to Fealy (1998: 120–8), the significance of NU allying itself with PNI in the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet was even greater than the significance of its withdrawal from Masyumi, as it established that, if pressed, NU would choose alignment with the nationalists over Islamic solidarity.⁴⁵

Once the cabinet was formed, political players began gearing up for the 1955 elections. NU's leaders began to realize that both Masyumi and NU were campaigning on the same ground, promising villagers that 'whoever chooses our party (NU or Masyumi) will go to heaven, and whoever chooses the other party (NU or Masyumi) will go to hell' (Feith, quoted in Irsyam 1984: 34). To strengthen the distinction between themselves and Masyumi, the party's leaders changed their rhetoric to one of greater tolerance and acceptance. At the same time they began to paint Masyumi as a hardline party, playing up its affiliation with Darul Islam, a militant Muslim group campaigning for an Islamic state in Indonesia (Irsyam 1984: 36). Thus, while NU was from the beginning a more moderately inclined organization than Masyumi from a theological standpoint, its rhetoric against the politicization of Islam at this stage was largely inspired by its political need to distance itself from and undermine Masyumi.

NU performed strongly in the 1955 elections, taking third place after PNI and Masyumi, and polling ahead of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). It gained 18.4 per cent of the vote and 45 parliamentary seats. Scholars have attributed this good result to NU's extensive network of traditionalist members throughout rural Indonesia, to the '*kiai-santri* mentality' whereby villagers often relied on the local *ulama* for direction on how to vote, and to the fact that NU had a long history of providing religious, social and cultural leadership at the local level.⁴⁶ For NU, this win was a welcome vindication of its ability to succeed in the world of politics.

In the latter half of the 1950s, increasing pressure from separatist movements and growing dissatisfaction with the party system led to attempts by President Soekarno, with strong support from General Nasution, to establish the ideology that was to become the hallmark of his regime, Guided Democracy. Implemented between 1959 and 1965, Guided Democracy allowed Soekarno to accrue a great deal of personal power, dismantle the parliamentary system and become more directive in the leadership of the country.⁴⁷

While NU shared Masyumi's opposition to the introduction of Guided Democracy because of the threat it posed to Islam and party power, at

each step along the way NU ultimately gave in to Soekarno whereas Masyumi did not. NU's cooperation with the regime, in the face of earlier professions of Muslim solidarity and in spite of the obvious authoritarian results, did not occur without intense internal debate. In the end, however, NU leaders (most vociferously, perhaps, Idham Chalid and KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah) argued pragmatically that all-out opposition to Guided Democracy would merely result in NU being excluded completely from cabinet and the structures of political power. Furthermore, NU received substantial funding for its *pesantren* from the state, and this, as well as the fate of 'tens of thousands' of NU civil servants serving in the bureaucracy, was dependent upon good relations with the government (Fealy 1998: 189).

The public manifestation of NU's close and cooperative relationship with Soekarno is often noted as beginning in 1954,⁴⁸ when NU bestowed the title of 'de facto interim holder of power' (*waliyul amri dlaruri bissyaaukah*) on Soekarno. This was the highest position of leadership over the *umat Islam*, and denoted a legitimate leader who must be obeyed. This move was intended to resolve questions about the authority of the Department of Religion (and by extension the Soekarno regime) to appoint legal guardians (*wali*). It shows the political adroitness of NU during this era: on the one hand, it hoped that the interim/emergency nature of the title would appease more hardline Muslims who objected to any legitimizing of the 'secular' state; on the other hand, it hoped to curry favour with Soekarno through this action and further consolidate its power over the department it dominated. Modernist Muslims, meanwhile, objected to such uses of *fiqh* for political gain, and felt that conferring legitimacy on Soekarno at this stage would undermine attempts to establish an Islamic state.

Following Ma'arif (1985), Marijan (1992: 87) argues that the close relationship between Soekarno and NU was based on the similarities between Java's two 'politically paternalistic subcultures' — the political regime and the *pesantren* world — which both involved patron-client relations and closely mirrored each other. This close relationship paid off for Soekarno in 1957 when NU agreed to participate in his controversial Working Cabinet (Kabinet Karya), formed after a rapid succession of six cabinets amidst increasing political party dysfunctionality. Formed under the prime ministership of Djuanda Kartawidjaja, the cabinet was dominated by NU and PNI (and was boycotted by Masyumi). Although ostensibly responsible to parliament, it in fact increased Soekarno's influence at the

expense of parliament. Mawardi himself acknowledges that NU leaders 'knew full well' (*disadari benar-bener*) that the Working Cabinet was unconstitutional, but justifies NU's participation on the grounds that it was the only way to prevent Soekarno from becoming a dictator (Mawardi 1967: 34). This line of argumentation — that it is better to work against evil from within than be completely excluded from positions of power — was a central theme of NU political thinking during this era. Anam (1999: 259) admits, however, that from this point on NU was characterized by 'position orientation' (*orientasi kursi*), in placing parliamentary and cabinet seats before principle.

NU'S ROLE IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

During these years there were two separate paths of political involvement for NU, one involving cabinet and parliamentary politics, and the other involving the debates in the Constituent Assembly over the role of Islam in the political system. Against the background of Soekarno's increasing authoritarianism and the breakdown of party politics, the Constituent Assembly met from 1955 to 1959 to try to form a new constitution.⁴⁹

The Constitution of 1945, approved on 18 August 1945 as the first Constitution of Indonesia, gave wide powers to the president that made him largely unaccountable to Indonesia's lower house of parliament, the People's Representative Council (DPR). For example, while both the president and the DPR could initiate legislation, the president could veto the latter's bills, and override its objections to presidential bills by issuing a presidential decree. Even the creators of the Constitution viewed it as provisional, and Soekarno had promised that once the Indonesian state was firmly established, an elected representative body would meet to fashion 'a complete and perfect constitution'. It took ten years, but eventually, on 15 December 1955, general elections were held to form the body charged with drawing up the new Constitution. These elections were marked by the same heated ideological Islamic versus secular polemic that had accompanied the formation of the 1945 Constitution, and the resulting Constituent Assembly was almost split down the middle between those who advocated the state ideology of Pancasila⁵⁰ as the basis for the state and those who wanted a state based on Islam.

Embedded within the task of forming a new constitution, therefore, was the decision on whether the state was to have an Islamic or secular

basis, the latter symbolized by the Pancasila. Debate crystallized around a struggle over the placement of the Jakarta Charter within the Constitution. The Jakarta Charter was a constitutional preamble drafted in June 1945 in an attempt to break a similar deadlock over the basis of the state. The original draft had contained a seven-word clause obliging Muslims to implement Islamic law: *dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya* — 'with the obligation to implement the sharia for adherents of Islam'. These words became the subject of fierce debate, with Muslims interpreting them as giving the state responsibility for implementation and enforcement of the sharia, but non-Muslims interpreting them as imposing a personal religious obligation on Muslims alone. Although the issue was never truly resolved, a kind of compromise, unsatisfactory to some, between Soekarno and the Muslim leaders resulted in the elimination of this contentious clause from the preamble to the 1945 Constitution.

To resolve the deadlock in the Constituent Assembly, in April 1959 Soekarno proposed that the assembly accept the 1945 Constitution as it stood, without changing the content of the preamble; he then proceeded to embark on a world trip that took him out of the country for two months (Lev 1966: 257). This pronouncement simply heightened the tensions in the assembly over the basis of the state, with Muslim leaders insisting that the contested seven words be reinstated in the preamble before they would accept a return to the 1945 Constitution. NU's Zainul Arifin wanted the original Jakarta Charter (including the contentious words) to be given legal significance and used as a source of law for Muslims (Fealy 1998: 213), while both Catholic and Protestant members insisted that it be considered merely a historical document without the force of law. NU's spokesperson in the Constituent Assembly, Ali Mansyur, then raised the stakes by demanding not only that the Jakarta Charter be made the official preamble to the new Constitution but, in case some might then argue that a preamble was not legally binding, that the requirement for Muslims to follow the sharia be added to the body of the Constitution as well.⁵¹

Lev (1966: 259–63) points out that the government had been counting on NU support to swing the vote and provide the two-thirds majority necessary to pass Soekarno's proposal. However, as became apparent, it had underestimated the strength of NU's commitment to an Islam-based state. In fact, backed by the other Muslim parties, NU proposed a formal amendment to Soekarno's proposal calling for the Jakarta Charter to be included as a preamble as well as being inserted into the body of the

Constitution. Amidst frantic last-minute lobbying, not-so-veiled threats of military intervention by Prime Minister Djuanda and counterthreats that without this amendment the Islamic faction would not accept a return to the 1945 Constitution, the NU amendment came to a vote on 29 May 1959, but failed to pass by the required two-thirds majority. Over the next two days, two more votes were taken on whether to accept the 1945 Constitution — Lev (1966: 268) notes that the government switched back and forth between open and closed voting in the hope of encouraging NU members to vote its way — but all three times the two-thirds majority was far from achieved.⁵² In the face of this final deadlock, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved, and on 5 June 1959 Soekarno issued a decree declaring a return to the Constitution of 1945. This abandonment of democratic process and permanent installation of a constitution that gave the president wide-ranging powers to override the will of parliament marked the formal transition to Guided Democracy, for which Soekarno has been both credited and blamed.⁵³

Initially NU opposed this move uncompromisingly, both because of the disproportionate power it accorded Soekarno and because of the continued exclusion of the contested section of the Jakarta Charter from the Constitution. After much negotiation, Idham Chalid, the chair (*ketua umum*) of NU, agreed to endorse Soekarno's position, persuaded that by making this concession NU would be able to extract commitments from the president to maintain the existence of the parliament and the Constituent Assembly (Fealy 1998: 211). Lev (1966: 246) views this move more cynically, arguing that NU was in essence being blackmailed by threats to bring various party leaders up on charges of corruption. At any rate, NU's regional branches were infuriated with the leadership's capitulation, nearly causing an internal mutiny, and ultimately the board's decision was reversed (Lev 1966: 260–2; Fealy 1998: 211–3).

When Soekarno dissolved parliament in 1960 after it refused to ratify his budget, and installed a new, hand-picked Mutual Cooperation (Gotong Royong) parliament, NU had to decide yet again whether to continue to cooperate. Masyumi was explicitly excluded from this parliament, and while NU was offered slightly more seats than in the previous parliament, overall the proportion of seats controlled by PKI went up 15 per cent while the proportion held by Muslim parties went down 20 per cent (Fealy 1998: 219). Amidst a great deal of internal upheaval and dissent, the Syuriah finally told NU's parliamentary members that they would have to make

up their own minds. Feillard (1999a: 61) reports that some were so unsure about what to do that they resorted to a kind of drawing of straws. But in the end, after much debate and discussion, only three of NU's 57 parliamentarians declined appointments in the new parliament.

This time, the rationale was that the importance of remaining in the government in order to oppose the increasing strength of PKI outweighed the potential dangers of Soekarno's rising authoritarianism (Anam 1999: 264). Noer (2000: 421) expresses the modernist view of NU's decision as pure accommodationism, 'placing the interests of their organization above the interests of Islam more generally'. Somewhat more sympathetically, Ida (1996: 27) explains it as a case of 'differing interpretations of Islamic teachings related to democracy', with modernist Muslims interpreting democracy according to Western liberal definitions that would certainly place Guided Democracy outside an acceptable understanding of democracy, and NU interpreting it according to the 'values of the *pesantren*', which emphasized social relations. Ida does not explicitly define a 'social relations' concept of democracy, but the implication is that NU's special relationship with Soekarno allowed it to view its actions as supportive of democracy.

With the important exception of NU's role in the Constituent Assembly debates, the late 1950s and early 1960s marked a period of cooperation and accommodation with the Soekarno regime, in the face of apparent violations of both principle and previously agreed policy. Nevertheless, NU leaders and politicians feel that history has vindicated their choices during those years. In 1960 Soekarno banned Masyumi because of its involvement in the PRRI regional rebellion.⁵⁴ NU was left as the largest Muslim party, and Idham Chalid issued these words of victory:

Before, NU was ridiculed and derided by a certain group as a provincial, traditionalist party, but now it appears that NU has become powerful, and will continue to become even more powerful in order to lead Muslim believers not only in Indonesia, but also throughout the world (quoted in Marijan 1992: 86).

In the end NU's actions do appear to have been justified from an instrumental point of view, for, as Lev (1966: 282) notes, 'the new cabinet marked the rise of NU as the chief Islamic party, Masjumi fading into a permanent and weak opposition'.

CONCLUSION

While the Khittah '26 project needed, and still needs, to portray NU's origins as 'purely' religious in intent and character, this chapter has shown that some of NU's founders were driven by political motivations, and that international political circumstances were equally instrumental in NU's birth. More importantly, however, I hope that this chapter has demonstrated the difficulty of separating the political and religious strands of identity and causation with respect to NU's origins and early years.

I have argued that the birth of NU was primarily an outcome of the modernist-traditionalist conflict — a conflict that was simultaneously religious and political. On the one hand, the establishment of NU, the early conflicts with modernist Muslims and the subsequent struggle with Masyumi were not about government or national politics, but about ways of protecting traditionalist Islamic practices, and about leadership within the religious community. Thus, it can be argued that NU was, at core, religiously motivated. On the other hand, this conflict played out most frequently in the formal political arena, and came to involve matters of resource allocation and government policy on religious issues. Thus, while many NU scholars then and now articulate a clear distinction between NU's political identity and its religious identity, it appears that the relationship between the two is at best murky.

Notes

1. For historical accounts of the origins of Islam in Indonesia, see Baloch (1980), Ricklefs (2001) and Riddell (2001).
2. For an example of this, see Suprpto (1987: 8–10). Meuleman (2005: 25) notes that in the early 1960s, this was also the 'official' line among Indonesian academics and government officials.
3. Florida (1995: 26–33) makes the important point that part of the colonial project of 'rewriting' Javanese culture involved the construction of a *priyayi* versus Islam dichotomy in which the *priyayi* were presented as anti-Islamic, an identity that has been reinforced by colonial and post-colonial historians.
4. For a more exhaustive list, see Suprpto (1987: 17–20).
5. See Benda (1958: Ch. 2) for a detailed and useful narrative on the interplay between Islam and nationalism during the period of colonial rule.
6. The two most widely cited and thorough histories of NU's origins emanating

from within NU circles are Haidar (1998) and Anam (1999); others include Mawardi (1967) and Machfoedz (1982). Reliable accounts from Indonesian scholars considered 'close' to NU but not necessarily from NU families include Marijan (1992) and Ida (1996). Good non-NU sources on the early days of the organization include Aboebakar (1957), Noer (1973) and Irsyam (1984). Non-Indonesian accounts include classics like *The Crescent and the Rising Sun* (Benda 1958) as well as more recent works by van Bruinessen (1994), the chapters by Fealy in Barton and Fealy (1996), and Fealy (1998).

7. For insightful documentation of NU's so-called 'politics of accommodation', see Fealy (1998). Fealy brilliantly describes the complex way that NU leaders used Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to inform and justify the political stances taken during the 1950s and 1960s. As this book will detail, this practice is still very much present in NU politics. Indeed, a prevailing joke in NU circles is that the *kiai* are experts in *fiqh* because they can use it to justify anything they want it to.
8. This is vehemently denied by many NU scholars (see, for example, Anam 1999: 59), who argue that NU pre-dated the modernist organizations in Indonesia. They offer as evidence the involvement of traditionalist *ulama* in two organizations, Tashwirul Afkar and Nahdlatul Wathan, both of which existed before the modernist organizations were formed. My counterargument is that while traditionalist Islam itself certainly pre-dated modernist Islam, NU as an organization did not. Tashwirul Afkar and Nahdlatul Wathan cannot be compared to NU; they were both very small study and discussion groups, not potentially nationwide mass organizations. For more information on Tashwirul Afkar and Nahdlatul Wathan, see Anam (1999: 30) and Feillard (1999a: 9).
9. The four prevailing *mazhab* of Sunni Islam (Syafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali) were founded in the tenth century and continue to be adhered to today by traditionalist Muslims.
10. Commonly translated as 'jurisprudence', *fiqh* is the extrapolation of teachings found in the Qur'an and Sunnah into a legal code for daily conduct.
11. While the term *ulama* connotes a true Islamic scholar, a *kiai* is a religious leader, usually the head of a *pesantren*, whose position may be due to lineage or personal charisma rather than actual mastery of Islamic texts and teachings. The *pesantren* play an important role in rural Java and Sumatra. The students (*santri*) may be of any age, but most commonly are high school aged. As well as the usual subjects, they are expected to master Islamic arts and sciences ranging from the classical texts to the martial and mystical arts. The culture of the *pesantren* accords the *kiai* complete and utter authority, and demands absolute, unquestioning obedience and loyalty from the *santri*. This is one source of the considerable authority and prestige a *kiai* enjoys in his village, others being the religious knowledge he is deemed to possess and the mystical

power he may employ. Dhofier (1982), while dated, is still considered the pre-eminent reference on *pesantren* life and culture. Zuhri (1974) provides a fascinating account of his own experience growing up in a *pesantren* from a young age (in 1929), and of his ascension to a position of leadership within NU.

12. The terms 'reformist' and 'modernist' (and sometimes 'revivalist') are often used synonymously. However, some scholars differentiate between the two, using 'reformism' to refer to the effort to rid Islam of non-orthodox practices and 'modernism' to refer to attempts to integrate contemporary technological and philosophical developments into Islam (see Fealy 1998: 2, n. 1). Fazlur Rahman (1919–88), one of the fathers of contemporary modernist Islam, explains that the two are directly related: pre-modern reform movements such as Wahhabism did the work of establishing a rejection of the medieval teachings and calling for a right to individual interpretation of the scriptures (*ijtihad*), while the modernists then did the intellectual work of filling the empty space previously occupied by medieval teachings with 'intellectual products of the modern civilization' (Rahman 1979: 215).
13. There was a great deal of opposition to the Wahhabi movement in its early years, partly because of its militancy but also because it banned many of the rituals and practices that the *ulama* had permitted. The Wahhabis conquered Mecca and Medina in the early 1800s, but were finally overthrown by superior Egyptian forces in 1818. They eventually returned to power in the early 1900s with the ascension of 'Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud (1880–1953) to the Saudi throne. For a more detailed discussion of Wahhabism, see Rahman (1979: 196–201). For an excellent examination of Wahhabism and other similar influences on Islam in Indonesia, see Bubalo and Fealy (2005).
14. On Muhammadiyah as an organization, see Nakamura (1983), Alfian (1989) and Peacock (1992).
15. In discussions of the ritualistic differences between modernists and traditionalists, this is the ritual most often cited. Literally, *tahlil* is the repetition of the phrase *la ilaaha illa 'llah* ('there is no god but God'), but in this context *tahlilan* refers to the ritual of community members gathering to pray for the soul of someone who has died. This is often a several-day, community-wide event that may be used to relay information to the community or collect for charity in addition to its religious purpose (Suprpto 1987: 273–7). Feillard (1999b) argues that, at the village level, *tahlilan* is one of the primary obstacles to the strengthening of ties between modernists and traditionalists through marriage: NU villagers consider Muhammadiyah members inhumane because they do not pray for the dead; they are afraid that if prayers are not offered, the spirits will come back to haunt them.
16. The purpose of *ziarah* is (1) to meditate on the hereafter (*akhirat*); (2) to pray

for fellow Muslims; (3) to seek blessings from the keeper of the grave (himself considered a holy man); or (4) to fulfil the commandment to respect one's parents even after their death. Modernists argue that the Prophet forbade such visits. Traditionalists counter that while he forbade them during the early years of Islam because of their connection with pre-Islamic rituals, later, when Islam was more firmly entrenched, he instructed his followers to conduct such visits (Ma'shum 1983: 35). See Ma'shum (1983: 31–8) and Jamhari (2000) for more background on *ziarah*.

17. Traditionalists say that this intent must be uttered verbally before worship, while modernists say it should be a silent expression. For more on *ushalli*, see Bowen (1993: 301–6) and van Bruinessen (1994: 24).
18. There is some argument about the year. In the first complete and academic history of NU, Anam (1999: 49) states that the first congress was held in Cirebon in 1921 and the second in Garut in 1922. He does not provide references for these assertions. Most other scholars, including Greg Fealy, Ali Haidar and Andrée Feillard, list 1922 as the year of the first congress, citing Noer (1980) as their source. Given the quality of this combined scholarship, I have given 1922 as the date of the first congress.
19. Accounts indicate that the atmosphere became quite hostile, with participants trading insults and calling each other 'unbelievers' (*kafir*) and 'polytheists' (*syirik*). As a result, the traditionalists left the congress feeling very disillusioned with both the forum and the modernists (Fealy 1998: 26; Haidar 1998: 47).
20. This rejection of their demands reportedly stemmed from the modernists' conviction that the reformism of the Wahhabis was a positive development for Islam (Fealy 1998: 26–7; Anam 1999: 55–6; Feillard 1999a: 11).
21. The committee was composed of KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, KH Masyhuri and KH Khalil as advisors, KH Hasan Gipo as president, H Shaleh Syamil as vice-president, Muhammad Shadiq as secretary and KH Abdul Halim as assistant (Anam 1999: 56).
22. The traditionalist delegation to Mecca was not able to attend the World Islamic Congress for procedural reasons, but two years later, in 1928, Wahab himself and Sheikh Abdullah Ghani al-Amir, an Egyptian scholar living in East Java, were able to obtain an audience with Ibn Sa'ud and receive assurances that the traditions of the Syafi'i *mazhab* would not be forbidden (Fealy 1998: 27, n. 22; Anam 1999: attachments I and II).
23. See the description of the leadership structure in NU's 1926 organizational statutes (*anggaran dasar*) and bylaws (*anggaran rumah tangga*), printed as attachments III and IV in Anam (1999), and also Fealy (1998: 27).
24. For a full list of the original leadership of NU, see Anam (1999: 75–7). The original line-up lasted only nine months; at NU's first Mukhtamar in October 1926, a new Syuriah and Tanfidziyah were chosen. KH Hasyim Asy'ari and

Hasan Gipo retained their positions as *rais am* and head of the Tanfidziyah respectively, but KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, who had held the third most important position in the Syuriah (after *rais am* and deputy *rais am*), was given a low-profile advisory position in the Mustasyar.

25. For example, Ma'mun (1998: 3) says that *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* refers to that group of Muslims which, with regard to both *fiqh* and the doctrine of monotheism (*tauhid*), relies on the Qur'an and Hadith rather than on 'rationality' (*akal*). As if this sideswipe at modernist Islam is not enough, the second half of his book deals with all manner of rituals pertaining to visiting the tombs of saints, an activity denounced by modernist Muslims as an innovation (*bid'ah*) not permitted by the Qur'an. Similarly, Siddiq (1969: 9) writes that *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* is 'a renewal, a correcting of the violations, departures and distortions of thought and opinion in understanding the Qur'an and Hadith'. He then proceeds to give a long defence of NU's reasoning in following the four *mazhab* and forbidding *ijtihad*. Thus, in Indonesian usage, and through such appropriations by NU *ulama*, the term has come to refer to the 'configuration of theology [*kalam*], jurisprudence [*fiqh*] and mysticism [*tasawwuf*]' that comprises NU's religious thought (Haidar 1998: 78). It should be noted that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as part of an overall renewal of thought within NU circles, the term has undergone a significant reconstruction; this will be explored more fully later in the book.
26. Although Aboebakar himself came from a modernist background, his biography of KH Wahid Hasyim offers one of the most complete, and sympathetic, accounts we have of NU during this era (see Aboebakar 1957).
27. As noted in Chapter 1, Fealy (1998) has written an excellent review of the literature in which he contrasts what he calls the 'modernist-dominated approach', which includes both Western and Indonesian criticisms of NU's 'political opportunism', with the 'tradition-respecting approach', which understands such accommodationism as being derived from Sunni religious precepts and therefore takes a more sympathetic stance towards it. Fealy places the work of Mochtar Naim, Leslie Palmier and Lance Castles in the former category, and that of Ken Ward, Benedict Anderson, Mitsuo Nakamura and Zamakhasyari Dhofier in the latter category (Fealy 1998: 1–16).
28. It is unclear how many of these were *kiai*; according to Haidar (1998: 85), 500 were *kiai*, while Anam (1999: 87) lists 350 *kiai* but 900 *kiai* assistants. It seems likely that a large portion of the participants were linked in some way to the *kiai*, because at this stage NU was still overwhelmingly an organization of *ulama*.
29. Marijan (1992: xiv, 45) argues that NU has been 'indirectly' political from its birth, but that its involvement in MIAI was evidence of a new political orientation. Fealy (1998: 39) also finds the 'first signs of an increasingly political mood'

- in the late 1930s, though he cites NU's 1938 Mukhtamar as a marker of this development. Feith (1962: 236), on the other hand, notes that NU itself dates its existence as a political organization from the establishment in 1952 of the League of Muslims (Liga Muslimin), which NU joined as a bona fide political party.
30. See Anderson (1966: 17–20) and Benda (1958: 175–87) for two contrasting views on Japanese colonial treatment of Islam in Indonesia.
 31. The original members of Masyumi were NU, Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Ummat Islam and Perikatan Ummat Islam. The latter two merged in 1951. Persis joined in 1948 and Al-Irsyad in 1950. Subsequently two Sumatran parties, Al-Jamiatul Washliyah and Al-Ittihadiyah, joined (Noer 2000: 53).
 32. See Aboebakar (1957: 331) for excerpts from an article by KH Wahid Hasyim depicting the gradual transition of Masyumi from a propaganda tool of the Japanese to a solidarity-building tool for Muslim nationalists.
 33. See Zuhri (1974: 221), Suprpto (1987: 56) and Anam (1999: 124).
 34. Van Bruinessen (1994: 59–61) makes the point that this understudied moment provides evidence that NU could indeed be 'radical', despite the many accusations levelled at it of accommodationism and political quietism. He explains NU's shift in thinking in terms of *fiqh* doctrines prohibiting the forcible removal of a legitimate leader: as long as the Dutch were the de facto rulers of Indonesia, they could not be opposed, but once the Japanese had established an interim national leadership, the Dutch could be viewed as enemies not only of Indonesia, but also of Islam.
 35. Although usually expressed as just an NU perception, at least one modernist scholar has presented it as the reality of the modernist attitude at the time (see Ma'arif 1985: 117). The depth of the pain and bitterness resulting from the treatment accorded NU at this time is revealed by the fact that it continues to emerge in conversation and informal discourse in contemporary NU circles. Examples of this will be presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of this book.
 36. See Kahin (1952) for an examination of the Indonesian nationalist movement and the war against the Dutch in the late 1940s; on Linggajati specifically, see pp. 196–209, and on Renville, pp. 224–55.
 37. See Zuhri (1974: 225), Anam (1999: 233–4) and Noer (2000: 172–4).
 38. This is reported by Zuhri (1982: 213), Marijan (1992: 62) and Anam (1999: 138). Fealy (1998: 83) states that the 1950 congress debated the matter but decided it was premature to call for secession.
 39. Fealy (1998) provides a thorough account of Wahab's role in removing NU from Masyumi. See Noer (2000: 86–92) for a less sympathetic account emphasizing the 'inelegant' (*kasar*) manner employed by Wahab in his dealings with Masyumi.
 40. When Wahab met with Soekarno in February 1952, there was widespread

speculation that the two men had discussed the issue of NU's secession from Masyumi — something that Wahab denied in public but affirmed in private (Fealy 1998: 86–7). It should be noted that Soekarno had an interest, and probably a not insignificant role, in destabilizing Masyumi by encouraging NU's exit from the party. According to Irsyam (1984: 30–2), the fact that Soekarno offered some Masyumi leaders ministerial posts if they would switch to NU is evidence of the president's involvement. Also, the president did not have a good relationship with Natsir, and during the latter's prime ministership (1950–51) there were several instances of conflict between them. See Feith (1962: 170–1) for a discussion of the conflicted Soekarno–Natsir relationship during this period.

41. For details on this debate, see Fealy (1998: 96–7). For a description of the decisions reached at the Palembang congress and the vote count, see Aboebakar (1957: 491–3).
42. For background on Dutch educational policy in the colonies, see Ricklefs (2001: 201–3).
43. The NU parliamentary faction consisted of seven former Masyumi members: A.A. Achsien, A.S. Bachmid, Idham Chalid, Muhammad Iljas, R.T. Mohammad Saleh Surjaningprodjo, Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and Zainul Arifin (Fealy 1998: 103–4).
44. The NU political party constitution is presented in full in Aboebakar (1957: 509–31).
45. Fealy (1998) provides an extensive examination of NU's motivation for taking this action; he says it was based on a desire for national stability and a functioning government above all else. See also Feith (1962: 207–302, 331–48) for an exhaustive examination of the political developments of the time, including the shifting alliances of NU and Masyumi.
46. See Suprpto (1987: 63), Marijan (1992: 75) and Irsyam (1984: 33) for a discussion of the factors that were crucial to NU's success in 1955.
47. For an extensive discussion of this process, see Lev (1966).
48. Although, as noted above, Soekarno is thought to have played a role in NU's withdrawal from Masyumi two years earlier, in 1952.
49. See Nasution (1992) for an in-depth look at the Constituent Assembly.
50. Although the Pancasila doctrine later came to be more closely associated with the Soeharto regime, Soekarno originally formulated its five guiding principles: belief in Almighty God; humanitarianism; national unity; democracy through consultation and consensus; and social justice. The first principle is usually interpreted as safeguarding freedom of religion for those adhering to the five major world religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism.
51. See Lev (1966: 264), Boland (1971: 95–6) and Fealy (1998: 214).

52. Lev (1966: 268) records the vote count as being 269 to 199, 264 to 204, and 263 to 203.
53. Lev (1966: 272–9) makes a compelling argument that it was in fact the chief of the armed forces, General Nasution, who engineered and literally ‘forced’ Soekarno to issue the 5 June decree. He shows that Soekarno, upon his return from his world travels, was uncomfortable with the way in which he was being pushed into what was in effect a disguised dictatorship. However, backed by the army and in a stronger political position, Nasution prevailed.
54. In the late 1950s a group of separatists in Sumatra rebelled against Soekarno, declaring a Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI). The last remnants of this rebel movement were defeated in 1961.

3

Kembali ke Khittah 1926 and the Discourse on Civil Society

The concept of a 'return' to NU's original socio-religious rather than political orientation was expressed long before 'Kembali ke Khittah 1926' (Return to the Guidelines of 1926) became a rallying cry in the early 1980s. Most scholars cite Marijan's (1992: 132) assertion that it was first heard in 1959 at NU's 22nd National Congress (Muktamar), when KH Achyat Chalimi of Mojokerto argued that NU had become too involved in political affairs, thereby placing the organization and its members at risk. The concept did not gain much traction at the time because of the intensely political atmosphere of the late 1950s. However, by the mid 1970s a combination of external political developments and internal conflicts would provide the momentum necessary for the Khittah '26 movement to change the course of NU's history.

I argue in this chapter that the salient issue is not whether Khittah '26 was a move towards or away from politics, but rather whether it allowed

NU to develop a more oppositional stance towards the New Order regime. An examination of political and internal developments between 1984 and 1998, in five-year segments, allows us to evaluate that question.

I also argue that, while often obscured by the political ramifications of Khittah '26, the civil society discourse the movement engendered among NU intellectuals and activists was equally important. The latter part of the chapter examines this discourse in more detail, taking an especially close look at the activist agenda it inspired. Central to this movement was Abdurrahman Wahid (or Gus Dur as he is called in Indonesia), the son of NU leader and politician KH Wahid Hasyim, the grandson of NU founder KH Hasyim Asy'ari, and one of the most formidable thinkers and strategists in recent Indonesian history. The chapter concludes that the civil society movement of the late 1990s was strongly informed by NU's political position, but that it eventually took on a life of its own, separate from the political exigencies of its architect, Abdurrahman Wahid.

THE FACTORS LEADING TO KHITTAH '26

Political Factors

In 1973 President Soeharto fused the four existing Muslim parties (NU, Parmusi, PSII and Perti) into a new party, the United Development Party (PPP), and the five non-Muslim parties (PNI, Parkindo, Partai Katolik, IPKI and Murba) into the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). This effectively reduced the number of parties able to contest elections to just three: PPP, PDI and the government party, Golkar. NU's chair (*ketua umum*), KH Idham Chalid, was rewarded for his cooperative stance during this process with the prestigious but somewhat uninfluential position of president of PPP.¹

Conflict within PPP began to emerge in 1977 around two issues: the institution of P-4, a government-sponsored course on Pancasila, and the proposed addition of Kepercayaan² (literally, 'Belief') as a state-sanctioned religion (Marijan 1992: 112). Tension over these issues was soon followed by conflict over PPP's stance on the government-sponsored election laws of 1980 (RUU Pemilu 1980), which were seen as strongly disadvantageous to party autonomy.³ On all of these issues, NU took a much more hardline stance than the rest of PPP, to the point that its members walked out of the legislative voting sessions at which the P-4 program and the issue of Kepercayaan were debated (Machfoedz 1982: 258–61).⁴

Conflict between NU and the rest of PPP escalated further when Jaelani Naro, the chair of PPP and the leader of Muslimin Indonesia (MI, formerly Parmusi), submitted his list of candidates for the upcoming 1982 election. For several months prior to this, NU and MI had been fighting about the number of candidates to be accorded each party in the next DPR.⁵ According to Machfoedz (1982: 276), the day before the party list was due to be submitted, Idham Chalid telephoned Naro and the two of them settled on a list of candidates that would not only *not* give NU the proportion of seats it had wanted, but placed its candidates far down on the list, thus making it less likely that they would be elected (see also Haidar 1998: 203–4).

Reaction to this development among NU leaders was heated. The deputy head of the Syuriah, KH Masykur, said that he was angry not just about the positions or the numbers, but about the way in which NU was being treated by its coalition partners (Machfoedz 1982: 282). Certainly NU must have felt slighted by the way in which the role of the party's Advisory Council (Majelis Syuro) — dominated by NU *ulama* — was gradually being weakened to have a merely consultative function; in 1984, it would be disbanded altogether. As Ida (1996: 54) remarks: 'The non-NU portion of PPP did not understand the political ethic of NU, which greatly reveres the role of the *ulama* ... These politicians clearly did not respect the history and political weight of NU'. In a response that almost uncannily mirrored NU's experience with Masyumi less than 30 years earlier, the NU leadership began to call for NU to withdraw from PPP. In 1981 Abdurrahman Wahid, then secretary of the Syuriah, described the growing conflict between NU and MI as one of 'differing philosophies' in which NU viewed PPP as a vehicle for the political struggles of Muslim believers (the *umat*) whereas MI viewed it merely as a professional political institution (Marijan 1992: 119). Of note here is the same sense of political marginalization that NU had experienced with Masyumi, and Wahid's framing of NU as the defender of Islamic political interests.

As the largest Muslim party at the time, NU increasingly viewed itself as the primary channel for Islamic political aspirations (Adnan 1982: 62). For most of the 1970s, its politics had been marked by unprecedented opposition to the New Order regime, often in the form of defending Islamic political interests. Leading up to the 1971 elections, for example, one of its most vocal anti-regime politicians, Subchan ZE, filled every speech with a call for *jihad* (Adnan 1982: 46); although it also has to be noted that in 1972,

under intense pressure from the government, KH Bisri Syansuri revoked Subchan's position as deputy chair (*ketua*) of the Tanfidziyah. In 1973, NU *ulama* played a leading role in a massive protest against a government-sponsored marriage bill that sought to limit polygamy and the authority of Islamic courts to legalize marriages (Feillard 1999a: 190–8). In the late 1970s, NU rejected the endorsement of Kepercayaan as a religion because of its potential to marginalize Islam politically. It also strongly opposed the government-sponsored election bill, and did not attend the official ceremony at which PPP formally endorsed the bill (Feillard 1999a: 215). Finally, at NU's National Meeting of Ulama (Munas) in 1980, it failed to issue the requisite 'request' for President Soeharto to serve another five years as president — a ritual expected of all social and political organizations prior to elections. Van Bruinessen (1994: 108–12) notes that this was to be the last of NU's blatant snubs of the government, because the Soeharto regime then began to 'discipline' the party by retracting its patronage of the *pesantren* and refusing to fund the social programs that supported the livelihood of many NU members.

Internal Factors

Meanwhile, within its own organization NU was suffering a crisis of leadership and internal upheaval that was not unrelated to its political situation. In 1979 Idham Chalid faced stringent criticism from regional leaders at NU's Semarang Mukhtar for his apparent lack of advocacy on behalf of NU within PPP.⁶ His public apology seems to have mollified participants enough for them to reinstate him as chair of NU for another five-year term — although Jones (1984) observes that the arrival of large numbers of Chalid supporters from the provinces, paid for by the government, may also have been a factor.

Shortly afterwards, the conflict between NU and MI over the list of candidates for PPP seats sharpened, resulting in a further marginalization of NU politicians within the party. When Chalid still did nothing to protest, a fierce struggle took place between his supporters and those who wanted him removed as the head of NU. This is often seen as a split between the politicians (the 'Cipete' group, referring to the Jakarta suburb where Chalid had his home) and the *ulama* (the 'Situbondo' group led by KH As'ad Syamsul Arifin, an influential *kiai* from the East Javanese town of Situbondo).⁷ In early May 1982, three senior *kiai* — KH As'ad Syamsul

Arifin, KH Ali Ma'shum and KH Machrus Ali — visited Chalid at his home and persuaded him to sign the letter of resignation they had brought with them. But when his supporters heard the news they were outraged, arguing that the organization's bylaws stipulated that a leader could only be removed by decision of a national congress. Chalid then revoked his letter of resignation and reclaimed his position as chair.⁸ It was then the turn of the Situbondo group to refuse to recognize Chalid's withdrawal of his resignation. In January 1983, Chalid issued a statement declaring the election of KH Ali Ma'shum as president general (*rais am*) of the Syuriah at the 1981 Kaliurang Munas to be void — a move that basically cleared his main enemy from the PBNU (van Bruinessen 1994: 124–5).⁹

This conflict, and Chalid's refusal to submit to the wishes of As'ad, arguably the most powerful *kiai* in NU at the time, highlighted a deeper problem within NU — the weakening of the power and authority of the *ulama*. As the Jakarta-based NU politicians became more and more powerful, they consulted the Java-based *kiai*, and took their interests into consideration, less frequently. According to van Bruinessen (1994: 117), it reached the point where the Java-based *ulama* felt that 'NU was no longer theirs' (see also Ida 1996: 48). This internal dynamic was exacerbated by the gradual shift of government resources at the village level from the *ulama* to local politicians. Kadir (1999: 183) describes a national trend in which the state began to penetrate deeper into village affairs, shoring up the power of the district heads and establishing competing religious organizations such as the Muslim Education Council (MDI). The result was an erosion of the religious authority of the *ulama* and *kiai* at the village level. At the same time as they were being marginalized within their own organization, in which theoretically they constituted the highest level of decision makers, their support base in the villages was disappearing.

THE EMERGENCE OF A THIRD GENERATION

It was at this point, when NU's politicians were coming under increasing criticism and the power of the *ulama* was being weakened internally and externally, that a new group of leaders came to the fore. Often referred to as the 'third generation' because many of them were the grandsons of NU founders (Ida 1996: 90), the members of this group were neither *ulama* nor politicians, but an eclectic group of young professionals and intellectuals.¹⁰ Foremost among them were Abdurrahman Wahid, Masdar

Mas'udi, Mahbub Djunaidi, Fahmi Saifuddin, Slamet Effendy Yusuf, Ghaffar Rahman and Rozy Munir (Mudhofi 1998: 76; Ida 1996: 90).

This group sought to find a middle ground between the warring Situbondo and Cipete factions by acknowledging NU's political nature while arguing that NU had strayed too far from its original purpose of promoting religious and social well-being. Too narrow a focus on formal politics, its leaders claimed, had resulted in the deterioration of NU as an organization (Mudhofi 1998: 77).¹¹ In the early 1970s they sought practical ways to alleviate poverty and promote the religious and economic well-being of NU's members at the village level, building their programs around the *pesantren*. Van Bruinessen (1994: 132) cites the primary involvement in this movement of the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information (LP3ES), which counted both traditionalists and some modernists among its members.

By 1974, the third-generation leaders were calling for NU to withdraw from formal politics and return to its 'original' 1926 social and religious orientation (Mudhofi 1998: 77). It was not the first time this call had arisen, but this time external and internal factors made it more appealing. Many felt that the neglect of 'social' (religious, educational and economic) affairs was stymieing the development of NU. In addition, NU's critical stance towards the state was becoming increasingly costly, both politically and economically. In 1971 the Department of Religion had been removed from NU's control, leading to a drastic reduction in its political influence and funding for schools; at the same time, the government had cut off much of its development and educational aid to NU institutes in retaliation for NU's criticism of the regime. The reduction in the flow of funding and patronage was felt most acutely at the district level by local NU leaders and small *pesantren* and schools (van Bruinessen 1994: 108–12). Kadir (1999: 185) describes a climate in the late 1970s in which local NU *ulama* were placed under surveillance or intimidated, where district branches had fallen into disarray due to lack of funding, and where NU events were shunned by villagers because they were not sanctioned by the regime. It was felt, therefore, that NU's 'period of politics' was benefiting only a small elite, to the detriment of rural *ulama* and their students (*santri*) (Muzadi 1994: xi).

This growing conviction in some parts of NU was intertwined with an effort to reinstate the supremacy of the *ulama* within the organization. Originally the authority for policy and decision making had rested with the

kiai in the Syuriah; the Tanfidziyah was simply an implementing agency. According to Marijan (1992: 125), this began to change during the tenure of Mahfud Siddiq as chair of the Tanfidziyah from 1937 to 1942. Siddiq was able to extend the reach of the Tanfidziyah by taking advantage of the geographical and intellectual isolation of the *ulama*. Meanwhile, NU met the demands of a modernizing era by giving rising young politicians such as KH Wahid Hasyim and KH Saifuddin Zuhri more authority (Marijan 1992: 126). Gradually the Tanfidziyah became the seat of power within NU, making it more attractive than the Syuriah for politically inclined *kiai*. By the late 1970s, members of the local Syuriah at the village level were often the *santri* of *kiai* in the Tanfidziyah, ensuring that true power and decision making would remain with the latter institution (Haryono 1990: 94). Moreover, the shortage of resources made members of the Tanfidziyah vulnerable to gifts and offers of patronage by New Order officials, contributing to a distortion of ethics and morals among the *ulama*.

The inter-relatedness of the call for a return to a more social and religious orientation and the call for the supremacy of the *ulama* to be reinstated made natural allies of the third generation and the *ulama*. This was a strategic alliance for the third-generation leaders, who knew that on their own they did not have the political weight to implement what was essentially a paradigm shift for the organization.

In 1979 two developments lent considerable support to the Khittah '26 movement. The first was the publication of a short treatise called *Khittah Nahdliyah* [Guidelines for NU Members]. It was written by KH Achmad Siddiq, a young *kiai* and a member of the Syuriah, in response to his realization that NU did not have a written statement of its beliefs and purpose — the implication being that, in the absence of such a statement, NU had lost some of its original mandate (Siddiq 1980: 15). The treatise outlined the essence of NU's founding philosophies and religious beliefs as well as the nature of NU as an organization. It was so popular that within a year of its publication it had sold out entirely and a second edition had to be issued. Both Chalid and his deputy, KH Masykur, called for it to be studied by all NU members. Given its claim to set out the original spirit and fundamental nature of NU, members of the third generation also embraced it enthusiastically as a central element of discussion and study.

The second development was the decision by NU's Semarang Mukhtamar in 1979 to: (1) examine the call for a return to the spirit of 1926; (2) strengthen the internal effort to respond to this call; and (3) strengthen the participation

of NU in national development initiatives (Marijan 1992: 136). While this marked an important step forward for the Khittah '26 movement, Haidar (1998: 195) has called it a 'half-hearted attempt' because it did not deal directly with the main problem, namely the dysfunctional relationship between NU and PPP. Ida (1996: 69), too, notes what appears to be a lack of commitment to the third element of the decision, observing that none of the social, economic and religious programs outlined in the decision actually materialized, because the national and regional leaders of NU, many of whom were also PPP officials, lacked the time and energy to implement such a program.

Nevertheless, the concept at least of a return to the spirit of 1926 had gained credence, and third-generation leaders began to meet regularly to 'socialize' the concept and develop a more complete picture of what it really meant. In a much quoted volume written in 1983, three third-generation leaders argued that NU faced four main problems: (1) NU determined all policy on the basis of political interests; (2) NU's long tenure as a political party had resulted in severe ethical and moral deterioration; (3) the *ulama* no longer occupied a supreme position within NU; and (4) because of its diversion of resources and energy to party politics, NU no longer had a strong grasp on the fields that had formerly been its primary domain — religious education, social development and so on (Yusuf, Syam and Mas'udi 1983: 120–4). Returning to the guidelines of 1926 was seen as an appropriate solution to address these ills.

Against the backdrop of the political events of the previous four years — NU's marginalization within PPP, the New Order regime's disciplining of NU, and the stringent criticisms directed at Chalid and the PBNU — the arguments of third-generation leaders resonated with many NU members. As a result, the push for *Kembali ke Khittah 1926* was in a strong position as NU prepared for its 1983 Munas and its 1984 Mukhtar. Even so, the success of the movement was far from assured, as NU, never exactly a homogeneous organization, was at this point even more seriously factionalized than usual.¹² It was this diversity of opinion, according to Ida (1996), that posed the biggest challenge to the Khittah '26 movement. Because of the existence of a strong cadre of *kiai* and NU leaders who were heavily invested in their political positions within PPP, the proponents of Khittah '26 knew they would have to set out a solid and unified vision of what the movement actually stood for. With this in mind, a group of third-generation intellectuals and activists known as the

G Group (Kelompok G) began publishing the *Khittah Jurnal* as a tool to disseminate their thinking to local NU branches.¹³

On 12 May 1983, a historic meeting of 24 pro-modernization figures took place in Jakarta. Called the Council of 24 (Majelis 24), this meeting brought together pro-Khittah '26 activists like Abdurrahman Wahid, Slamet Effendy Yusuf and Masdar Mas'udi, young but important *kiai* such as KH Sahal Mahfudz, KH Muchid Muzadi and KH Mustofa Bisri, and even a few politicians.¹⁴ The council commissioned a seven-member Team of Seven (Tim Tujuh) to formulate a concept paper on Khittah '26, to be presented at NU's upcoming Munas.¹⁵ During the six months in which the team met, its members received hundreds of letters from NU members seeking to contribute to the formulation of such a concept. Despite the differences that emerged between team members,¹⁶ in October 1983 they finally released a small booklet entitled *Pokok-pokok Pikiran Pemulihan Khittah 1926* [Main Points for the Restoration of Khittah 1926] (Tim Tujuh 1983: 4).

This booklet was the first fully developed formulation of Khittah '26, and for a small 32-page treatise it contained some radical proposals. It suggested three main courses of action to return NU to its original spirit: (1) the reactivation of NU's involvement in social efforts; (2) the end of NU's identity as a political organization and the immediate reintroduction of social, economic and religious programs; and (3) a regeneration of NU's leadership by reinstating the supremacy of the Syuriah and fostering a new generation of leaders (Tim Tujuh 1983: 12). The booklet did not have anything particularly new to say about the latter two points; the third generation had been advocating the need to abandon the political, focus on the socio-religious and reinstate the supremacy of the *ulama* for some time. Hidden within the elucidation to point (1), however, was an indication that the concept of Khittah '26 was not just about 'returning' to an original state, but actually seeking to bring about a 'renewal' of NU's religious thought.

Under this point, in two short paragraphs, the team called firstly for an expansion of the understanding of 'worship' (*ibadah*) from a prescribed set of traditionalist rituals to include humanitarian and social work (Tim Tujuh 1983: 15), and secondly for an effort to make *fiqh* — the basis of NU's social and political stances — more dynamic and more relevant to changing contexts and needs (Tim Tujuh 1983: 15). Although ultimately obscured by the controversy over NU's political status, these ideas were potentially much more radical and revolutionary, as they challenged core elements of

NU's religious identity: the rituals that defined its status as a 'traditionalist' organization, and the adherence to the classical interpretations of *fiqh* contained within the four *mazhab*. Still, these proposals did not create the kind of outcry one might have expected, partly because of the attention paid to the political implications of Khittah '26, but also because the team had the backing of some very important *ulama*, including KH As'ad Syamsul Arifin and KH Achmad Siddiq.

THE SITUBONDO MUNAS AND MUKTAMAR

In the early 1980s, both of the primary competing factions of NU, the Situbondo group and the Cipete group, agreed on the need to resolve the leadership issues that had arisen, but disagreed on the forum in which this should be done. The Cipete group wanted to hold a Mukhtar without delay, while the Situbondo group insisted that the proper course of action was to hold a Munas first, so that the *ulama* could formulate an agenda for the ensuing Mukhtar (Mudhofi 1998: 72). In either case, NU was obliged to obtain the permission of the government to hold the meeting. Given the pressure being placed on NU at the time to endorse Soeharto's demand that Pancasila be made the sole foundational principle (*asas tunggal*) of all mass organizations,¹⁷ both groups publicly announced that discussion of this issue would be at the top of the agenda (Mudhofi 1998: 73).

Ultimately it was the government, and not NU itself, that made the fateful choice that quite possibly has determined NU's path to the present day, by finally sanctioning the Situbondo group, and therefore the holding of a Munas at As'ad's *pesantren* in Situbondo in December 1983. This was a stroke of luck for the pro-Khittah '26 group, as their primary opponents, the NU politicians in PPP, would obviously not have strong representation at such a meeting. Furthermore, the victory of the Situbondo group meant that the upcoming Mukhtar would also be held at Situbondo, after 40 years in which a congress had not been held at a *pesantren* (Marijan 1992: 143). Clearly the symbolic significance of the surroundings alone would be a significant advantage for the pro-Khittah '26 group. Once the government had indicated its support for the Situbondo faction, the intensity of the conflict between the two groups faded. Indeed, in September 1983, just before the Munas, the two groups held a reconciliation meeting at the home of KH Hasyim Latief, upon which, according to Ida (1996: 59), 'the conflict was assumed to be over'.

As expected, the Khittah '26 proposal did find support at the Situbondo Munas. Important as this decision was, however, it was overshadowed by debate about the role Pancasila should play in the organization (Marijan 1992: 145). Soeharto's decision to support the Situbondo group had been made after a crucial meeting between As'ad and the president in September 1983. As'ad, who believed that Pancasila and Islam were compatible, and who had in any case become convinced of the necessity of accepting Soeharto's edict, assured the president that he would be able to carry the rest of the *ulama* with him at Situbondo (Feillard 1999a: 241). So it came as some surprise to As'ad when a large group of *ulama* from Madura opposed the proposal. In an attempt to convince them that accepting Pancasila would not violate the principles of Islam, As'ad reportedly argued that Pancasila was a form of *sharia* law.¹⁸ This was a highly controversial argument opposed by many, including Abdurrahman Wahid.¹⁹ Ultimately it was KH Achmad Siddiq who played a central and vital role in convincing the *ulama* that Pancasila was compatible with Islam as a philosophical basis for NU (Ramage 1996: 146).²⁰

A year later, in December 1984, three momentous decisions were made at NU's 27th Mukhtamar in Situbondo. The first was the election of Abdurrahman Wahid as Director of the Tanfidziyah and KH Achmad Siddiq as *rais am* of the Syuriah; the full membership of the new board is shown in Appendix 2. The second was the acceptance of Pancasila as the sole foundational principle of NU. The third was the decision to return to the guidelines of 1926.

During the year leading up to the congress, Abdurrahman Wahid had been campaigning to be chosen Director of the Tanfidziyah. His negotiations with key figures in the government paid off when one of his principal competitors for the position, Chalid Mawardi (backed by Idham Chalid), was appointed ambassador to Syria shortly before the congress, and effectively shipped out of the country (van Bruinessen 1994: 138). Nevertheless, there were several other strong candidates for the position, including Fahmi Saifuddin, Mahbub Djunaidi and Tolhah Mansur. The prevailing narrative in NU and scholarly circles is that Wahid owed his eventual success to a dream in which his father, the noted *kiai* Wahid Hasyim, appeared to As'ad, instructing him to install Wahid as Director of the Tanfidziyah. This swayed the votes of several senior *ulama* who had until then been unsure about Wahid because of his controversial style and liberal opinions (van Bruinessen 1994: 139; Kadir 1999: 197). However,

Miftach (1994: 40–4) claims that the dream was a fabrication; he says that As'ad told him privately that he had made it up in order to ensure that Wahid was chosen, after being approached by a 'strongman' (*orang kuat*) in the government who had expressed the regime's desire for Wahid to occupy the top position.

Siddiq, who had not previously had a national profile, was so successful at the 1983 Munas that he was chosen without contention as *rais am* of the Syuriah at the 1984 Mukhtar (Muawiyah 1996: 5). He was an up-and-coming young leader with impeccable traditionalist credentials; he had also been instrumental in the election of KH Ali Ma'shum (one of the three *ulama* credited with developing the Khittah '26 concept) as *rais am* at the 1979 Mukhtar (van Bruinessen 1994: 122). At the 1984 Mukhtar, Siddiq again played a central role in gaining acceptance for Pancasila as the sole basis of NU, handling this highly sensitive and potentially volatile subject with some adroitness. Until then, no Muslim organization had endorsed Soeharto's edict — indeed, three months earlier the Islamic Students Association (HMI) had rejected it — so the eyes of all Muslim organizations were on NU at this point (van Bruinessen 1994: 135). The tension surrounding the issue was also informed by the historic debates of the 1940s and 1950s pitting an Islamic state against secular nationalism, in which Pancasila had defined the latter.

NU's *ulama* were aware that Soeharto intended to use Pancasila to ensure that Islam played only a minimal role in politics. They were therefore against replacing 'Islam' with 'Pancasila' as NU's ideological basis. At the 1983 Munas, the crux of Siddiq's argument had been that Islam was a religion whereas Pancasila was a political ideology; therefore, the two could coexist. Moreover, because Islam was not a political ideology, NU did not support the essentially political concept of an Islamic state. Consequently, there was no contention between NU's Islamic identity and its acceptance of Pancasila (which by default was understood to be antithetical to an Islamic state) (Feillard 1999a: 243–9; van Bruinessen 1994: 136–7).²¹ A year later, at the 1984 Mukhtar, Siddiq argued that the formulation of the first principle of Pancasila (Belief in One Supreme God) to exclude folk beliefs such as Kepercayaan from being defined as a religion removed one of the obstacles to the acceptance of Pancasila as the sole foundational principle of NU (Feillard 1999a: 246). In the end, the congress agreed to amend NU's constitution to make Pancasila the sole foundational principle of NU. However, it also subtly reaffirmed

NU's deeper commitment to Islam by immediately following this with the statement that NU was a religious organization 'based on the faith of Islam' (*beraqidah Islam*).²²

NU thus became the first Muslim organization to accept Pancasila as its sole foundational principle. While usually justified by NU scholars in terms of the religious issues and rationalizations just discussed, this decision was actually informed more by the political realities of the time. That is, Soeharto was placing increasing pressure on Muslim organizations to accept his decree on Pancasila at a time when NU desperately needed to repair its relationship with the regime if it was to survive. At the time, Wahid explained the political exigencies of the decision as follows: 'We can't afford to counter Pancasila. What we can save, we do. I say to the kiais, "do not sink with the ship"' (quoted in Feillard 1999a: 237).

The decision to return to the guidelines of 1926 was officially formalized in Decision 02/MNU-27/1984 of the 1984 Mukhtar. It consisted of nine points laying out NU's religious purpose, the theological tenets upon which it was based, its social agenda, its organizational function and the role of the *ulama*, and its relationship with the state and nation.

The first point provided background on NU's origins. The second point contained a definition of Khittah NU — the original principles (*khittah*) on which NU was founded — adopted directly from the 1983 Munas:

The Guidelines of NU (Khittah NU) are the foundation of the thought, positions and behaviour of the members of Nahdlatul Ulama, which must be reflected in all actions by individuals as well as the organization in each step of decision making. This foundation is the belief in *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*,²³ which is established according to the social conditions in Indonesia, and covers both religious and social acts (PBNU 1984: 103).

The third point outlined NU's religious tenets; it stated that NU followed the teachings of Islam derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, and it provided the textual bases for NU's theology and *fiqh*. The fourth point established the religious basis for NU's social stance: 'tolerance' (*tassamuh*), 'balance' (*tawazun*) and 'doing good and avoiding evil' (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*). The fifth point listed the social and religious stances of NU, as informed by the tenets outlined in points (3) and (4). The sixth point explained the 'endeavours' of NU: to promote communication among the *ulama*, to raise the standard of religious education and so on. The seventh point outlined the role of the *ulama* within the organization, emphasizing in italicized type that: '*The ulama ... are always to be placed as the mentors, guides, protectors and*

supreme leaders of this organization' (PBNU 1984: 104–8). The eighth point dealt with NU–state relations; it simply stated that: 'As a social organization, Nahdlatul Ulama is not tied to any particular political organization or other social organization' (PBNU 1984: 110). The last point restated NU's commitment to its founding principles (*khittah*) as the primary guide for all its activities.

In November 1985, the PBNU published a small booklet called *Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama* [Guidelines for Nahdlatul Ulama] (PBNU 1985). It contained, word for word, the decision of the Mukhtar on Khittah '26, enhanced by verses from the Qur'an and Hadith in both Indonesian and Arabic.

It is clear that the final formulation of the Khittah '26 decision, as officially ratified by the Situbondo Mukhtar, was a more conservative document than originally intended by its third-generation authors, if not also by the *ulama* involved in its inception. One striking absence from the final decision was the elements of renewal written into the Khittah '26 discourse by the Team of Seven. The attempt to broaden the definition of worship (*ibadah*) and NU's approach to *fiqh* was not reflected in the final version, which relied primarily on the standard explanation of NU's religious tenets and theological bases as laid out in Siddiq's *Khittah Nahdliyah*. Instead, the revised version specifically reinscribed the value of *bermazhab*, that is, relying on the collective wisdom of the Sunni tradition rather than personal interpretation of the scriptures. This reinforcement of a classical traditionalist perspective, along with a return to the supremacy of the *ulama* and a concentration on religious affairs, meant that the decision to return to the guidelines of 1926 had the potential to be a return also to a more traditional or conservative religious orientation. This potential was strengthened by the absence, in addition, of the Team of Seven's recommendation for a 'regeneration' of the NU leadership.

The final version approved by the Mukhtar also watered down the intensity of the call for NU to quit politics and focus on social and religious programs. The 1983 Munas had demanded in quite strong language that the PBNU immediately 'forbid' NU leaders from serving as political party officers. However, the 1984 Mukhtar merely stated that NU did not have formal ties to any 'political organization or social organization'. The significant difference between these two statements reflected the fact that the politicians in NU were still a viable force whose presence had been much more dominant at the Mukhtar than at the Munas.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KHITTAH '26

The initial reaction of NU members to the Khittah '26 decision was confusion. In typical NU fashion, the wording of the decision was vague enough to allow room for multiple interpretations of its meaning. In spite of the fact that the concept had been discussed and debated in NU circles for more than five years, no one was sure what the 'correct' interpretation of the final decision should be.

At the time, there were four prevailing schools of thought.²⁴ First, some felt that Khittah '26 meant a wholesale departure from politics — that NU would now devote itself exclusively to social, religious and economic programs. Second, some interpreted it as releasing NU members from their 'obligation' to vote for PPP, opening the door for participation in PDI or Golkar. Third, rather idealistically given the political situation at the time, some saw Khittah '26 as removing NU organizationally from PPP, but without the corresponding switch to PDI or Golkar, thus leaving open the possibility of NU forming its own party. Fourth, some saw the Khittah '26 decision as removing NU from formal politics defined narrowly, but allowing it to remain involved in broader political activities, specifically endeavours to build civil society.

The wide range of interpretations of the Khittah '26 decision indicates the failure of its proponents to establish a dominant narrative for the movement among the broader NU membership. As a result, it was open not only to varying interpretations but also to being shaped to fit whatever political or personal contingencies existed at the time. A common joke circulating in East Java among members of Ansor was: 'If you want to be confused, join NU' (*Kalau mau bingung, masuklah NU*) (Haryono 1990: 92).

Aware of the problems, the new PBNU board, many of whose members had been involved in the push for Khittah '26, set about facilitating understanding and support of the decision as quickly as possible. Mudhofi (1998: 85) divides the implementation of Khittah '26 into three phases: a 'socialization' period lasting from the Situbondo Mukhtar in 1984 to the Krapyak Mukhtar in 1989; a 'consolidation' period lasting from 1989 to the Cipasung Mukhtar in 1994; and a 'perfecting' period lasting from 1994 until 1998 (the year in which Soeharto was ousted and Mudhofi's book was published). While this classification is rather arbitrary, and Khittah '26 was far from 'perfected' during the final period, it is nevertheless useful to

examine the implementation of Khittah '26 in these five-year increments in order to assess which of the four interpretations is best supported by political and internal developments within NU.

From Situbondo to Krapyak (1984–89)

Events immediately following the Situbondo Mukhtamar seemed to support the second theory above, that Khittah '26 had been engineered to facilitate a break with PPP and a closer relationship with Golkar — but not entirely, as things are never that simple with NU. At the very least, one can say that there was no lessening of political activity after NU's decision to 'withdraw from politics', despite the efforts of the board to achieve a formal disengagement from politics.

The PBNU lost no time in obeying the directive of the Situbondo Munas to restrict its leadership from participating in political office. In January 1985 it issued an edict (SK No. 01/PBNU/I-1085) banning all national and regional officials from holding office in any political organization. The provinces were given one year to implement this directive and the districts two years.²⁵ In the face of vociferous protest from NU politicians in PPP, the PBNU pointedly reissued its directive less than a year later, in October 1985 (Marijan 1992: 158).

Despite the efforts of the PBNU to separate NU from PPP, the NU-affiliated politicians in PPP were not asked to resign, although they could no longer claim to represent NU as a political party. Nevertheless, in 1985 they sought to make a comeback and take over the leadership of PPP. They demanded the ousting of Jaelani Naro, who, it will be remembered, had 'sidelined' them within the PPP leadership and (in 1984) disbanded the Advisory Council, their power base within the party. As'ad, one of the key figures in NU's withdrawal from politics, personally pressured government officials to remove Naro from office, but without success (Ihsan 1990: 166; Feillard 1999a: 266–7).

In the lead-up to the 1987 elections, NU politicians such as Yusuf Hasyim and Mahbub Junaidi took a different tack, leading a drive to 'deflate' (*menggembos*) the PPP vote. In religious meetings throughout Java, *kiai* urged NU members to shift their allegiance to Golkar, and many ordinary members (who were not, like NU officials, banned from occupying party positions) were pressured into taking up positions with Golkar.²⁶ Although not officially sanctioned by the PBNU, this action was

ultimately effective: PPP gained only 16.0 per cent of the vote in 1987, a drastic reduction from the 27.8 per cent it had received in 1982 (Ihsan 1990: 167). It was also immediately clear who had benefited most from NU's wholesale desertion of PPP: Golkar's vote rose from 64.3 per cent in 1982 to 73.0 per cent in 1987.²⁷

NU immediately began to reap the political benefits of its contribution to Golkar's spectacular gain, with high-level Muslims in the bureaucracy and army who had previously denied their NU origins openly beginning to support NU. Haidar (1998: 224–5) claims that this development was described by many within NU as the 'fruits' of the Khittah '26 movement. Golkar further expressed its gratitude by appointing Abdurrahman Wahid to the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) as a Golkar member of parliament, and giving Slamet Effendy Yusuf, then head of Ansor, a position as head of the youth division of its Jakarta branch. Thus, these two leading figures of a movement that had campaigned against NU leaders occupying political party positions now accepted political party placements; moreover, neither the PBNU nor the participants at NU's 1989 Mukhtamar issued any criticism of this apparent violation of Khittah '26. Haidar (1998: 225–6) justifies this by arguing that the spirit or intention of Khittah '26 was to weaken PPP, so NU leaders were really only restricted from occupying PPP positions; their involvement in Golkar or even PDI was seen as 'balancing out' the political system.

In addition to the political rewards flowing from Khittah '26, NU experienced significantly improved economic conditions. Government funding for its *pesantren* and other schools, which had taken a drastic downturn during the 1970s, began to flow back in. Feillard (1999a: 307) reports a four-fold increase in government subsidies to NU schools in East Java between 1984 and 1991.

It seems clear that many elements within NU, including some third-generation activists, used Khittah '26 rhetoric during this period to achieve a severing of ties with PPP, to shed NU's image as an opponent of the regime and to foster a closer relationship with Golkar. At the same time, there is evidence of the beginnings of a civil society discourse and movement emerging from the Khittah '26 decision, and the articulation of values of tolerance and religious pluralism gained momentum. Van Bruinessen (1994) points out that KH Achmad Siddiq used his leadership position at the 1987 Cilacap Munas to add two important new dimensions to the staple NU principle of 'closeness among fellow Muslims' (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*):

the concepts of 'closeness among fellow citizens' (*ukhuwah wathaniyah*) and 'closeness among fellow human beings' (*ukhuwah basyariyah*). In an initiative accepted by all the *ulama* who attended the meeting, Siddiq used these principles to promote a spirit of greater tolerance towards non-Muslims and to focus on global rather than parochial issues (van Bruinessen 1994: 146–7).

The empowerment of civil society in the sense of creating a stable, self-sufficient, educated and strong citizenry was taken very seriously by the new leadership of NU, many of whom were veterans of the social development activism mentioned earlier. They sought to turn NU's attention and energies inward to the task of improving the education levels, self-sufficiency and economic well-being of the NU masses at the village level, establishing a number of organizations charged with promoting the welfare of members in various fields. Among them were the Institute for the Study and Development of Human Resources (Lakpesdam), founded in April 1985; LKPSM, the Yogyakarta-based branch of Lakpesdam, established in November 1986; and the NU Agricultural Development Institute (LP2NU), founded in 1985.

Nevertheless, as the 1989 Krapyak Mukhtar approached, the Wahid–Siddiq leadership duo faced mounting criticism and the prospect that they would be toppled. Opposition to them was mounted by two prominent groups, one led by KH As'ad Syamsul Arifin of Situbondo, who had engineered Wahid's appointment as Director of the Tanfidziyah in 1984, and the other by KH Idham Chalid, who wanted NU to remain active within PPP. Opposition to Wahid was generally expressed in terms of his controversial, 'un-Islamic' behaviour, for example his public statements that Muslims should say 'good morning' rather than using the Islamic greeting *assalamu'alaikum*, his decision to open a 'Jesus Christ Poetry Night' for a Christian group, and his participation in meetings of NGOs known to be critical of the government (Marijan 1992: 183).²⁸ But there were other, more personal, reasons for the opposition of some *kiai*; for instance, Wahid was reportedly unwilling to facilitate the channelling of 'patronage' from government officials to As'ad, unlike the previous chair, Idham Chalid (van Bruinessen 1994: 183).

Nevertheless, Wahid enjoyed strong support from the younger generation of *kiai* and the new generation of regional leaders, and his 'eccentricity' (*keanehan*) was for the most part still tolerated by most members. Moreover, he succeeded in having the process for choosing the

top three positions in NU changed from selection by a small group of elite decision makers (*formateur*) to direct election by regional NU leaders. In the event, he was the only candidate to get more than the requisite 40 votes during the nomination process, and hence was elected automatically by acclamation after the first round of voting (Marijan 1992: 184). KH Achmad Siddiq also succeeded in beating Idham Chalid for the position of *rais am* of the Syuriah, by a vote of 188 to 116 (Marijan 1992: 184).

Ultimately, the Krapyak Mukhtar strengthened both Wahid's power within NU and the Khittah '26 movement. Not only was Wahid elected to the top position by acclamation in a direct vote of regional leaders, giving him a powerful mandate, but his title was changed from director (*ketua*) to chair (*ketua umum*). This was a reversal of the situation in 1984, when the *ulama* had downgraded his official title from *ketua umum* to *ketua* in a clear signal that the Tanfidziyah should be considered subordinate to the Syuriah.

The reinstatement of the title therefore signified an increase not only in his personal power but in that of the Tanfidziyah as an institution.²⁹ In addition, the Krapyak Mukhtar issued a statement reaffirming NU's political neutrality, thereby in effect reiterating its commitment to Khittah '26.³⁰ Wahid's stronger position within NU also benefited the movement in that he was able to appoint many of his pro-Khittah '26, third-generation cohort to significant positions on the new PBNU board.³¹

From Krapyak to Cipasung (1989–94)

If the intention behind the decision to return to the guidelines of 1926 was to foster a closer relationship with Golkar, then the early 1990s brought a failure of that strategy. NU's relations with Golkar suffered during this period for two reasons in particular.

One very important one concerned the establishment in 1990 of a rival organization representing modernist Muslim interests, the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI). Soeharto played a key role in its formation and became its official 'sponsor' in 1993.³² ICMI was purportedly established as part of an effort by modernist Muslim leaders to unite the *umat*, although ultimately it polarized Muslims because of the mutually beneficial relationship its modernist leaders developed with the Soeharto regime. ICMI was problematic for NU both because of its formalistic and sectarian approach, which the Khittah '26 discourse opposed, and because

it was viewed as using Islam for political gain (Haris 1994: 26). Ramage (1996: 241) quotes Abdurrahman Wahid, one of ICMI's most vocal critics, as saying:

Their [ICMI's] behavior, and the behavior of Soeharto in using ICMI for his own non-Islamic goals, reconfessionalizes politics. ICMI returns Islam and religion to the political arena after two decades of efforts to deconfessionalize politics.

Ramage (1996: 236) argues that Wahid's antipathy towards ICMI was due to his anxiety 'to demonstrate that the *umat* still supported his leadership and the ideal of an inclusive, democratic Islam'. Implicit in this characterization is Wahid's desire that both he personally and NU as an organization be viewed as the leader and primary representative of Islamic interests in Indonesia. The emergence of ICMI and its subsequent intimacy with the regime threatened that supremacy.

The second, related, reason for the deterioration in NU-Golkar relations was that Golkar did not sufficiently show its appreciation of the political sacrifice NU had made through its Khittah '26 decision, and gave its leaders only a few key positions within Golkar. So when one of these appointees, Slamet Effendy Yusuf, was replaced as head of the Jakarta branch of Golkar's youth division by Din Syamsuddin, a rising ICMI figure, NU leaders were incensed and insulted. Miftach (1994: 57) describes their reaction as follows:

This was truly ... insulting to NU. It is understandable that anger arose within NU circles towards Golkar. Golkar's position ... resulted in a loss of hope among Khittah supporters, who had hoped that Golkar would become a partner with NU in implementing Khittah '26 in the social, political and economic spheres.

Among other things, NU's disillusionment with Golkar led to a rising desire for NU to return to formal politics, and specifically to the fold of PPP. This took shape with yet another attempt by NU leaders, specifically Abdurrahman Wahid and Matori Abdul Djalil, to take over the leadership of PPP during the latter's 1994 National Congress, and specifically to install Matori as party head.³³ This effort failed, and the MI candidate, Buya Ismail Hasan Metareum, was named chair with Matori as deputy chair. Wahid angrily denounced the NU politicians who had failed to support him as 'not really NU' and indirectly threatened another 'deflation' of the party at the upcoming elections (Gaffar 1994: 69). To observers, however,

NU's machinations were simply another example of its persistent political manoeuvring and showed, in the opinion of Miftach (1994: 38), the 'bankruptcy of Khittah '26'.

The heightened need and desire of NU leaders to return to politics was even bleeding into the Khittah '26 movement. The reinforcement of Khittah '26 at the 1989 Krapyak Mukhtar was followed by a flurry of new programs: NU and Bank Summa set up a program to establish 2,000 rural credit banks; many NU agencies established mutual aid associations; and the women's wing of NU, Muslimat NU, established a program to increase the incomes of women.³⁴ Although these programs were said to embody the spirit of Khittah '26 by turning the renewed focus on social, economic and religious affairs into practical programs focused on the grassroots membership, Haidar (1998: 229) observes more cynically that the NU leadership intentionally encouraged this plethora of programs in order to distract NU members from the politicking of its leadership, 'which nevertheless is not going to disappear that easily'.

Indeed, political motivations seemed to lie behind even the increasingly 'progressive' discourse of Khittah '26 activists. Wahid's own articulations in the early 1990s promoting democratization and human rights were seen as a calculated attempt to bring NU closer to PDI, which had a reputation for speaking out on these themes, and which at the time was the only viable 'opposition' vehicle, given that the relationship between NU and PPP had deteriorated. Thus, when NU failed in its attempt to take over the leadership of PPP, Wahid was congratulated for his political foresight, as NU was now in a position to shift its allegiance to PDI (Djufri 1994: 79).

As NU approached its Cipasung Mukhtar in 1994, therefore, criticisms of Khittah '26 were mounting. Many of the programs instituted in the wake of the Krapyak Mukhtar had either failed or were in serious trouble. Also severely weakening the pro-Khittah '26 camp going into the congress was the loss of three of the *kiai* who had been most influential in building support for the Khittah '26 decision: KH As'ad Syamsul Arifin, KH Achmad Siddiq and KH Ali Ma'shum. Their deaths were a significant blow for the pro-Khittah camp, as these three *ulama* had provided the religious legitimacy and authority essential for the success of any discourse or movement within NU.

The Cipasung Mukhtar, described by Fealy (1996) as the most controversial in NU history, was beset by conflict primarily about two issues: Khittah '26 and the candidacy of Abdurrahman Wahid for a third

term as chair of NU. In October 1994, just before the Muktamar, Wahid had proposed moving to the Syuriah and abolishing the Tanfidziyah in order to ensure the pre-eminence of the Syuriah. When this idea was rejected, he decided to run again as chair of the Tanfidziyah (Fealy 1996: 259). His challengers for the position were Fahmi Saifuddin, Chalid Mawardi and Abu Hasan; when the first two dropped out of the race, Hasan was left as his primary opponent. As has been the case throughout NU's political history, the stance of the government would be important in influencing the outcome. Here Wahid was on thin ice; four of the most powerful men in Indonesia were hostile towards him because of his increasingly vocal criticism of the regime: Soeharto, Harmoko (chair of Golkar and chair of the DPR/MPR), B.J. Habibie (chair of ICMI) and R. Hartono (chief of staff of the army) (Fealy 1996: 264). In the end Wahid achieved a narrow victory of 174 votes to Hasan's 142 in the final vote count. Nevertheless, he retained enough power to reject Hasan's demand that he be given 45 per cent of the positions on the PBNU, and thus was able to fill the board with his own supporters (Fealy 1996: 271–3).

After Cipasung (1994–98)

Tension between NU and Soeharto mounted in the two years after the Cipasung Muktamar as Wahid became more critical of the regime and Soeharto attempted to sanction him. Opposition to the New Order by activists and politicians reached a turning point in July 1996 when the government attacked the Jakarta headquarters of PDI, resulting in the death of five people, the disappearance of another 23 and many more injuries. Although this had the desired outcome of ousting party chair Megawati Soekarnoputri and sending a clear warning to other opponents of the regime, it also had the unintended effect of turning Megawati into a national hero.

Realizing that Soeharto would no longer tolerate any further opposition to the regime, East Java *ulama* and some Jakarta politicians engineered a reconciliation between Wahid and Soeharto. In November 1996, Soeharto paid a 'surprise' visit to an NU event at which he and Wahid were famously photographed shaking hands. A day later Wahid announced that NU would support Soeharto's bid for another term as president.³⁵ He consolidated his newly discovered friendship with the regime by meeting with General Hartono and escorting Soeharto's daughter Tutut (Siti Hardiyanti Indra

Rukmana) on a 'safari' tour of East Java *pesantren* just weeks before the 1997 general elections.³⁶ The elections resulted in a predictable win for Golkar, which captured 74.5 per cent of the vote (Kadir 1999: 365). PPP gained 22.4 per cent and PDI only 3.1 per cent.

The *ulama* seem to have found the return to a state of accommodation and harmony with Soeharto a relief, as they were reluctant to give up the benefits flowing from the 'honeymoon' Islam had been enjoying with the New Order regime (Kadir 1999: 267). But the third-generation activists and next generation of NU students and activists were deeply critical of Wahid's activities. Indeed, they were so incensed over his dealings with Tutut that, in defiance of the PBNU leadership, they issued a press release calling for a boycott of the 1997 elections (Kadir 1999: 367). This more critical stance was indicative of developments taking place within the younger generation of NU. While Wahid and other elite PBNU leaders were still deeply involved in the world of formal politics, many of his third-generation cohort had remained in the NGO world raising a new generation of activists and intellectuals.³⁷ By the late 1990s, this new generation of civil society activists and their third-generation mentors had developed a deep and thriving discourse on civil society.

NU'S CIVIL SOCIETY DISCOURSE

While the ideological and theological roots of NU's discourse on pluralism and tolerance are centuries old and have been explored at length by others,³⁸ the contemporary discourse on civil society can be traced directly to the concepts and philosophies underlying the Khittah '26 movement. At least a decade before the Khittah '26 decision was formally accepted in 1984, a group of intellectuals and activists — initially including modernists as well as traditionalists — were spearheading a renewal of thought on the interpretation of religious texts, and seeking to make the *pesantren* centres of learning and agents of change. Eventually this grew into a more intellectual effort to restore the religious and economic relevance of NU to its members in the villages, drawing on the culture and prestige of the *pesantren*.

At the centre of these efforts was the Association for the Development of Pesantren and Society (P3M), founded in 1983 with the support of a number of former LP3ES activists. Like LP3ES, P3M had the support of both traditionalist and modernist activists, united in their goal of seeking

pesantren-based 'social transformation', though at times divided by personal antipathies.³⁹ After Khittah '26 was formally accepted in 1984, NU established a number of affiliated organizations of its own to run wide-ranging social programs, as detailed earlier in this chapter. These became important centres of thought and activism oriented towards educating and empowering the rural-dwelling farmers, fishers and religious leaders who formed the mainstream NU membership.

In 1993 a group of students in Yogyakarta who had been active in study groups for some years formed the Institute for the Study of Islam and Society (LKiS), an organization whose leadership and domain were recognizably NU even though it did not have formal ties to NU. LKiS and P3M became the main vehicles for the implementation of the 'renewal' aspects of Khittah '26 that had been elided from the formal decision at Situbondo. Here, the pro-Khittah '26 activists were able to channel their efforts into promoting a contextualized approach to *fiqh*, a regeneration of the NU leadership down to the *pesantren* level, and a rethinking of some of the more traditional tenets and philosophies of NU.

By the early to mid 1990s, the discourse had shifted from a paradigm of *pesantren*-based community development to one of civil society. As NU became increasingly critical of the government under Wahid's leadership, these organizations created a network of activists and intellectuals committed to raising the political awareness of ordinary Indonesians, and advocating on behalf of small farmers and villagers who were being exploited by local government. As ICMI became stronger and more closely allied to the New Order regime, this new generation of activists also began to speak out on issues of pluralism and tolerance within Islam. Foremost among them were figures like Ulil Abshar-Abdalla (a former director of Lakpesdam and currently a leading figure in the Liberal Islam Network (JIL)), Syafiq Hasyim (formerly with P3M and now the deputy director of the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism and a prominent analyst on gender issues) and Imam Aziz (a founding member of LKiS and a leading articulator of civil society discourse).

The remainder of this chapter will take a closer look at NU's civil society discourse, firstly by examining the differences between modernist and traditionalist understandings of 'civil society', then by exploring three major elements of NU's civil society discourse, and finally by looking at how this discourse has translated into an activist agenda in the cases of Lakpesdam and LKiS.

‘Civil Society’ versus *Masyarakat Madani*

In the late New Order, when discourse on civil society was becoming fashionable, its two main proponents were NU, which used the term ‘civil society’, and modernist Muslim intellectuals, who preferred the term *masyarakat madani*. The terms themselves highlight one of the most visible differences between the two groups: whereas NU borrowed the English term, modernists chose a term that could be interpreted in a number of different ways. *Masyarakat* is an Indonesian word meaning ‘society’, and *madani* is an Arabic word usually used to refer to the pressure society exerts on the state. However, some modernist scholars say that *madani* means ‘civility’, from the Arabic word *madaniyah*, and others say that it refers to the society of Medina where the Prophet Muhammad was essentially the head of state. Because of the wide range of meanings that can be attached to this term, some neo-modernist scholars have used it to refer to a kind of Islamic state. This has allowed some traditionalist scholars to accuse modernist articulations of civil society of being Islamist in purpose and orientation. While the vision of civil society espoused by most neo-modernist thinkers is no more ‘Islamic’ than that espoused by NU thinkers, the modernists’ insistence on using the Arabic terminology, along with their criticisms of NU as being too ‘Western influenced’, have given an aura of ‘Islamicness’ to their discourse.⁴⁰

A more substantial point of difference between the two groups’ approaches to civil society lies, unsurprisingly, in their positions *vis-à-vis* the state. For NU scholars and activists, civil society was autonomous from and external to the state, functioning as a ‘watchdog’ or critical restraint on the government. Given NU’s position outside the formal political system, this allowed NU itself to be viewed as a potential agent of civil society. Thus, Baso (1999a: 4–18) argued for the rejection of a ‘Western-influenced’ civil society of liberalism, secularization and rationalization, calling instead for one that ‘empowered society to stand up to the state’. Modernist and neo-modernist Muslim thinkers, on the other hand, articulated a view of civil society that was focused more on fostering the values of tolerance, pluralism and civility. In their view, civil society was not necessarily separate from, and certainly not always in opposition to, the state. According to Nurcholish Madjid, one of the chief architects of neo-modernist understandings of civil society, the view that civil society could topple a government was naive:

... rather, the relationship between civil society and the government is more often defined by cooperation than conflict ... [W]e also need a space where there is a connection between civil society and the state, whether they are working together or in conflict (Madjid 1996: 5).⁴¹

This articulation of civil society as complementary to the state was consistent with the proliferation of modernist Muslims in the New Order bureaucracy at this time.⁴²

Core Elements of NU's Discourse on Civil Society

Although the vision of civil society articulated by individuals and affiliated organizations within NU has varied, three elements have been a consistent part of the discourse: the importance of autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state; opposition to political Islam; and the necessity to promote pluralism and tolerance. All three of these core elements were informed by NU's political position in the mid 1990s, and in particular by the political agenda of Abdurrahman Wahid.

Autonomy vis-à-vis the State

As discussed earlier, one of the original interpretations of the Khittah '26 decision was that it was intended to give NU the political room to stake out a more critical stance towards the New Order regime. Although NU's political activities in the years immediately following the decision did not support such a reading, in the mid 1990s, as NU became more disillusioned with Golkar and Wahid became more critical of the regime, NU's emerging civil society discourse did take on a more oppositional nuance. This became even more prominent in the last years of the New Order, when opposition to the regime was a carefully articulated yet clear purpose of NU's civil society rhetoric. In 1997, for example, senior LKiS leader Imam Aziz (1997: 216) noted that although NU had done everything it could to integrate itself into the mainstream, it had 'little bargaining power in the national political sphere'. For this reason, NU had been forced to concentrate its political and economic efforts outside the formal political sphere, where it had sought to 'build civil society internally while simultaneously urging other organizations to do the same — to build a society that is characterized by democracy and tolerance, that values pluralism, and that upholds the law and justice' (Azis 1997: 218).

The primary architects of NU's civil society discourse during the early 1990s were Wahid himself and his close friend and protégé, political scientist A.S. Hikam. According to Salim (2000: 5), 'NU's civil society cannot be distinguished from Wahid's views and his individual actions'.⁴³ Wahid's intellectual contributions to the development of a civil society discourse, in concert with his more overt political manoeuvres, have led many observers to conclude that from the start he intended Khittah '26 to be an oppositional force. Wahid himself had said that Islam was an 'inspirational base for a national framework of democratic society' (Wahid 1990: 24), observing that it was from within the Muslim community that civil society in its contemporary form in Indonesia had begun to emerge (quoted in Hikam 1999: 42). In his own words, the goal of NU was 'social transformation on a more complete and fundamental level' (Wahid 1994: 23). The accompanying explanation of 'social transformation' read like a bill of rights: NU was seeking freedom of speech, an impartial legal system, and economic and social equality. In the mid 1990s Wahid often called on NU to exercise 'social' and 'moral' control over the government, defining 'social' as that which would support democracy (Wahid 1994: 24).

The themes of opposition and autonomy articulated by Wahid in the early to mid-1990s resonate even more strongly in Hikam's work. Hikam took a Toquevillian stance on the question of the autonomy of civil society *vis-à-vis* the state. He argued that the embryos of civil society in Indonesia were the 'social institutions that were more or less independent, such as *pesantren* for example', although a true civil society, in the sense of institutions that were able to 'maintain autonomy from the state and serve a balancing function with the state', did not emerge until the twentieth century (Hikam 1998: 10). The purpose of civil society was to promote egalitarianism, democracy, human rights and pluralism (Hikam 1998: 13); religion-based social organizations, especially NU, had a pivotal role to play as agents of change to achieve such a society (Hikam 1994: 135). Hikam explicitly argued that the Khittah '26 decision marked the birth of NU's identity as a force for civil society, because it was through this decision that NU had demonstrated its independence and its ability to manoeuvre in opposition to the state (Hikam 1994: 136). In the aftermath of Khittah '26, NU was able to broaden the 'political space' available to civil society in the face of state attempts to restrict it, and was successful in constructing in an indirect way a 'counterhegemony' and 'counterdiscourse' to the state monopoly of power (Hikam 1994: 150).

Opposition to Political Islam

NU's critical stance towards the state and its opposition to 'political Islam' — the invocation of Islam for political purposes — were closely intertwined, especially as the intimacy between the New Order regime and the more conservative elements of Islam within ICMI and the military grew. The well-known opposition of NU — or, more accurately, of Wahid and the civil society activists within NU⁴⁴ — to political Islam in the mid to late 1990s was directly informed by this development. As we saw in Chapter 2, NU was not always against political Islam; in the 1940s and 1950s it had claimed to be the only true representative of Muslim political interests, and it had fought for the Islamization of state and society during the Constitutional Assembly debates. Even Wahid, whose passion for the subject was well known, had not always been as adamantly opposed to promoting Islamic political interests within the formal political sphere.

However, the Khittah '26 decision was highly conducive to the development of a discourse against political Islam for other reasons as well. NU's withdrawal from formal politics allowed it to describe itself as a 'social' organization at a time when modernist Muslims dominated the bureaucracy and PPP. From this high moral ground, it could castigate its longtime foes, the modernists, as being inherently 'political' — a category imbued with negativity because of the stigma attached to the New Order regime. The establishment of ICMI in 1990 and the regime's courting of fundamentalist Muslim groups in the mid to late 1990s⁴⁵ provided fuel for NU's claims that modernist Muslims were exploiting Islamic symbols and language for political gain. Thus the rhetoric against political Islam being disseminated by NU's civil society activists found a convenient target in NU's historical political enemy, the modernist Muslims. Most of the authors of NU's civil society discourse created a clear demarcation between themselves and NU politicians, insisting that they were engaged in the realm of ideology, not politics. Nevertheless this two-pronged attack — with NU politicians railing against political Islam in the press, and NU activists writing articles and giving seminars on pluralism, tolerance and opposition to a legalistic politicized Islam — eventually struck the same target.

While the fall of Soeharto in May 1998 ended the artificial repression of political Islam, resulting in an explosion of Islamic and Islamist parties and discourse nationwide, NU continued to campaign against the conflation of Islam and politics. Criticism of the exploitation of Islam for sectarian

political purposes was a prevailing theme of its civil society discourse throughout 1999 and 2000. In seminars, talks, articles and training sessions, young NU intellectuals argued, based on Qur'anic texts, that political aspirations and the activities of the state should not be channelled through religion, and that religious symbolism should not be used to forward political interests. For example, the lead article of the 1999 edition of *Halqah*, a P3M publication, argued that:

If what is being sought is a cultural structure in which religion provides a set of ethical and moral values, then actually political Islam does not need to use religious symbols as a strategy, but should be satisfied with providing the energy and values that are relevant to our political life. ... [However,] the strategy of political Islam is to use religious symbols, and does not work for the real interests of Muslims ('Berpolitik Demi Ummat Atau Demi Rakyat', *Halqah*, 1999(10): 7–10).

The same themes were sounded by senior *ulama* and politicians. For example, in an interview published in the same edition of *Halqah*, Dr Machasin, deputy head of the Yogyakarta Syuriah, says:

Those who say that Islam can only be promoted through an Islamic party are too arrogant. Islam is everywhere. If we return to the age of the Prophet, he did not make his primary objective the establishment of an Islamic label. ... These days we seem to be more interested in the label of Islam, and even if there is corruption, or irresponsible activities, as long as it is 'Islamic' we say 'oh, never mind then' ('Nabi Tidak Memperjuangkan Label Islam', *Halqah*, 1999(10): 17).

These NU activists, intellectuals and leaders often drew a distinction between cultural Islam (*Islam kultural*) and political or structural Islam (*Islam politik*). While on the surface this appeared to be a distinction merely between those who promoted the interests of Muslims through non-political (intellectual, educational, religious) means and those who did so through party politics, because of the political configurations at work in the late 1990s in Indonesia, cultural Islam came to denote the substantialist Islam most often represented by traditionalists and neo-modernists, and political Islam the formalist or scripturalist Islam represented at the time by more hardline modernists.⁴⁶

Religious Pluralism

NU's emphasis on religious pluralism is the third core element of its civil society discourse. It, too, is closely intertwined with NU's opposition

to political Islam, and was similarly heightened by Soeharto's fall. For example, in 1998 Masdar Mas'udi, the executive director of P3M, wrote that Islam and democracy were compatible in that they shared a commitment to universal values and human rights (Mas'udi 1998: 11). The problem occurred, he said, when Islam became associated with political power, and certain basic rights such as freedom of religion then became politicized. Under an Islamic state, the human rights of non-Muslims would be undermined and the right of people to choose and change their religion denied, in ways that would contradict the essential values of Islam (Mas'udi 1998: 13). Elsewhere he argues along the same lines:

Islam did not come into being to standardize the format or shape of all of the hopes, ideals and desires of human beings, who vary in their beliefs, religion, culture and customs. Rather, it came into being to standardize the internal workings of the *umat Islam* (Mas'udi 2000: 27).

Writing shortly after the 1999 general elections, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, one of NU's foremost social commentators, made a more explicitly political point about religious pluralism. He openly criticized the elite 'Islamist' leaders who were calling for the *umat Islam* to be represented more prominently in the Indonesian political system, on the grounds that the followers of Islam were not a unified force but adhered to a wide variety of political agendas and platforms. He noted, for example, that none of the 11 explicitly Islamic parties that had taken part in the 1999 elections, four of them from NU alone, had done well. Their poor results demonstrated that the '*umat Islam* ... apparently does not use Islam as a foundation for its political agenda' (Abshar-Abdalla 1999a: 57).

The Civil Society Agenda of NU Activists

The civil society discourse that developed within NU circles during the 1990s was generated almost exclusively by the NU-affiliated organizations established in the wake of the Khittah '26 decision. While many of these were established, and continue to be led, by third-generation figures, the new generation of civil society activists and intellectuals that sprang up under their tutelage took the discourse to a deeper level by creating community-based programs designed to make abstract concepts like pluralism, human rights and political participation relevant to the farmers, fishers and labourers in the villages. A closer look at some of these

community-based programs may afford a deeper insight into the civil society discourse and praxis that emerged in NU in the late 1990s.

LKiS and Transformative Islam

LKiS provides a good example of the way in which the Khittah '26 decision opened the doors to an alternative discourse of renewal that took on a life of its own and went far further than the thinking of the original Khittah '26 activists. The core founders of LKiS — Imam Aziz, Eman Hermawan, Jadul Maula, Hairus Salim and Nuruddin Amin — were all active in the mid to late 1980s in the Yogyakarta branch of NU's university students' group, the Indonesian Muslim Students Association (PMII). In 1993 they formally established LKiS to promote dialogue among progressive groups, both Muslim and non-Muslim (signified by the small 'i' for Islam in the organization's name).

The primary theme of LKiS was 'transformative Islam'. Its early thinking on this subject was deeply influenced by the leftist tendencies of liberation theology as represented by the thinking of Egyptian philosopher Hassan Hanafi in particular. In 1993, LKiS published a translation of Kazuo Shimogaki's *Between Modernity and Post-modernity: The Islamic Left and Dr. H. Hanafi's Thought* (Shimogaki 1988; LKiS 1993), thereby establishing a reputation for themselves as proponents of 'critical Islam' (*Islam yang kritis*).

In their introduction to the book, the editors define 'leftist Islam' as follows:

Leftist Islam is not Islam in Marxist clothing ... nor is it an eclectic mixture of Marxism and Islam. ... Leftist Islam was born from a full understanding of the oppression of Muslims, and seeks to achieve a reconstruction of all traditional structures of Islamic thought in order that they may function as a liberating force (quoted in Sodik 1999: 63).

LKiS's concern with liberation was informed by a sense of being doubly oppressed — firstly by a 'hegemony of *ulama*' who interpreted and implemented religious texts according to their own interests, and secondly by a 'hegemony of those in power' that restricted freedom of expression (Sodik 1999: 57). Thus, one of the primary goals of its members was to liberate Muslims by deconstructing and reconstructing some of the core text-based tenets of NU, such as *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*.⁴⁷ In this respect they

were not just following in the footsteps of the third-generation activists, but seeking to take the gains they had made through Khittah '26 one step further. According to Nuruddin Amin, NU's approach to *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* needed to be made more populist and more reflective of social realities (Sodik 1999: 91). It had to be seen not as a divine mandate, but rather as a 'system of knowledge' that could be debated and criticized (Sodik 1999: 92).

The interventions of LKiS on behalf of a transformative form of Islam and a more democratic society were not limited to internal discourse; its members developed a strong activist agenda that by the late 1990s had evolved into concrete grassroots-based training programs. For example, in early 1998, just before the fall of Soeharto, LKiS developed a training module to introduce *kiai* and their *santri* to conceptions of human rights, pluralism and religious tolerance as these existed within Islam. It was based on the Islamic doctrine of *al-dloruriyat al-khomsah* (Five Essential Principles), namely:⁴⁸

- 1 *hifdz al-din*: the right of Muslims to practise their religion, extended by the facilitators to mean the right of others to practise their own religions, thus, religious tolerance;
- 2 *hifdz al-nafs wa al-'irdl*: the right to life, described by facilitators as the right to the basic necessities of life, the right to freedom and the right to justice;
- 3 *hifdz al-'aql*: the right to intellectual expression and activity, extended to include the right to free speech and the right to one's own opinion;
- 4 *hifdz al-nasl*: reproductive rights and the right to ensure the future of one's descendents, including the right to a profession, expressed by facilitators as the right to individual privacy; and
- 5 *hifdz al-mal*: the right to own property, and by extension a prohibition against harming someone else's property, including through corruption, theft and monopolies.

I attended a training session on the five principles at a traditional (*salafiyah*) *pesantren* in Tegal, where my presence, and that of the other female participants, was tolerated as a concession to LKiS. The first day of training was meant to provide an overview of critical approaches to religious texts and a comparison of the secular versus Islamic versions of human rights. What eventuated, however, was a day-long debate on whether or not the

Islamic version of human rights included the right to convert from Islam to another religion. The participants accepted without much protest the notion of freedom of religion, in the sense that Christians had the right to be Christians, but did not agree that Muslims had the right to choose *not* to be Muslims. Thus ensued a 'war of texts' in which verses were hurled back and forth. The three primary facilitators, Jadul Maula, Imam Aziz and Achmad Fikri, were well prepared for this, because LKiS had earlier that year completed a significant research project on texts that supported the ideals of pluralism and religious tolerance. They were therefore able to hold their own against the *kiai* in this textual battle. Nothing was definitively resolved, but at least one could say that a substantive dialogue had taken place in which participants were not only exposed to, but really had to grapple with, the concepts of religious freedom and tolerance.

Lakpesdam and Grassroots Political Participation

In the late 1990s, LKiS and Lakpesdam held very similar views on the need to promote civil society values. However, whereas LKiS was only *affiliated* with NU, and therefore relatively free to develop its own platform, Lakpesdam was structurally *part* of NU, and as such had to be more reflective of prevailing PBNU policies.

Although Lakpesdam was originally established to promote the professionalization of NU members, by 1996, with civil society the prevailing paradigm among NU activists and intellectuals, its purpose had become 'the creation of the NU community into an autonomous social force that can become a model for civil society in Indonesia ... with the hope that this social force will aid in the democratization process' (Kadir 1999: 255).

In 1997, Lakpesdam developed an ambitious three-year program to raise the awareness of NU members about the meaning and implications of civil society in the local context. A detailed look at a workshop held under this program demonstrates how the organization went about developing a discourse on civil society within a traditionalist Muslim framework. In June 1998, I attended a crisis management workshop held over five days at a *pesantren* in Ciaro, West Java.⁴⁹ Soeharto had just fallen from power, and the nation was enduring severe economic hardship because of the Asian economic crisis. Participants included four local NU officials, eight PMII students, four members of Ansor, several local *kiai*, two members

of Fatayat NU, two members of Muslimat NU and four local *pesantren* or mosque administrators. Although the purpose of the workshop was ostensibly to develop strategies for coping with the ongoing economic crisis, the highly political orientation of the participants was revealed almost at once when they spoke about what they hoped to gain from the workshop. Overwhelmingly they answered 'to radicalize NU members so that they would form a political party', 'to motivate NU members to leave Golkar' and so on. The issue of party politics was to resurface later in the discussion.

On the first day of the workshop, participants were given a short course in what the Lakpesdam facilitators called 'social analysis'. They were urged to consider Marxist-oriented questions such as 'Who owns the means of production?', 'How are goods/riches distributed?' and 'Who makes and who benefits from the regulation of resources?'. Participants then worked in groups to map out actual power relations at the grassroots level in their own localities. Through a guided participative process, they were gradually shown the networks of hegemony and exploitation that existed at the local level. They discussed, for example, the case of a Golkar village head who worked with the head of a government-owned cooperative — which both bought the farmers' produce and set the prices for it — to keep the prices local farmers received for their produce artificially low, 'protected' by a local military officer who also took a percentage of the profits.

The facilitators then presented a macro analysis of the situation in which Indonesia found itself. Burdened by international debt, the Indonesian government taxed and exploited the country's businesspeople and landowners, who in turn cooperated with the military to oppress the 'lowest man on the totem pole' — farmers, fishermen, factory workers and so on. The primary objective of this session was to highlight the role of the New Order government and military interests in oppressing the 'little people' and causing the current economic crisis. Interestingly, however, there was a fair amount of frank and explicit discussion about the complicity of the NU elite in this pattern of hegemony — of landowning *kiai* working with local government officials to exploit sharecroppers, and of rich Muslim businessmen controlling the means of production for fishermen (boats, equipment and so on) and using this power to oppress them economically.

On the second day of the workshop, the focus shifted to the articulation of a 'vision' for NU. The discussion became animated around the issue

of NU's Islamic basis, with some arguing that the organization's primary mission was to promote a peace-loving society based on sharia and others objecting that this was a sectarian viewpoint that conflicted with NU's commitment to Pancasila. One participant who had recently returned from graduate work at Al-Azhar University in Cairo was insistent that the only way out of the economic crisis was to create a political and economic system 'based on Islam' (*berdasarkan Islam*). Lakpesdam facilitators were fairly firm at this point, reiterating that NU had made an organizational decision to work together with other religions, which included protecting their right to exist. Participants were finally able to arrive at a consensus that NU's vision should be to implement *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* and follow the teachings of Islam, but that this did not entail imposing NU's own values on those outside the organization.

After this somewhat abstract discussion of values and principles, the facilitators brought the discussion back to the local level, asking participants to develop an action plan for a specific project that would allow them to apply what they had learned about local power structures and implement the values and principles they had agreed on. The group settled on a conflict over a large parcel of land that had been systematically 'signed over' to local government officials by the New Order government but was not being used. Given the economic hardship prevailing at the time, the group decided to try to get this land returned to the people so that it could be farmed. They formed a committee to pursue this issue under the leadership of the provincial branch of NU, which undertook to seek the assistance of local military officials sympathetic to their cause.

Both the complexity of NU and the difficulty of reaching a consensus on the meaning of civil society were evident at this workshop. The tensions and divisions between those who wanted NU to adopt a more Islamist stance and those who maintained the need for pluralism and tolerance were prominent throughout the workshop, complicating the attempt to link these values with NU's core identity. One thing that did unite the group — crossing generational, class and educational lines — was the demand that NU form a political party. This was in conflict with prevailing understandings of Khittah '26. In addition, the proposition that NU members should be required to join such a party conflicted with the values of free political participation being promoted by the facilitators. Perhaps the most ironic aspect of all was the final determination to seek

the assistance of local military officials — hardly supporters of civil society values — in having the disputed land returned.

The clear conclusion is that while, at a rhetorical level, NU civil society activists like to position themselves as critics of the government and the military, when rhetoric needs to be transformed into action at the grassroots level, political pragmatism asserts itself and NU acknowledges and seeks to utilize the power structures available to it. This may provide a clue to what on the surface may appear to be a surprising alliance between a traditionalist Muslim organization and modern, even post-modern, discourse on civil society and democracy. When examined at the level of output, however, NU follows the same practices and patterns it has throughout its history — pragmatic cooperation with those in power in order to improve the economic and political well-being of members.

Of course, one cannot make sweeping generalizations based on just one workshop. However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, NU-affiliated organizations conducted hundreds of similar programs across Indonesia, all offering a complex mixture of 'standard' civil society rhetoric on pluralism, religious tolerance and human rights along with more pragmatic political education and mobilization of grassroots political participation. More often than not, the political participation they advocated was not direct action in the form of demonstrations, strikes and so on, but rather quiet negotiation with local officials to achieve concrete economic and political benefits. Many of the alumni of these workshops went on to carry out local projects in the name of civil society, setting up distribution networks for basic food and necessities, forming units to monitor and report on potential outbreaks of sectarian or other kinds of violence, organizing local farmers to conduct hearings before regional parliaments on land rights issues, or conducting public interfaith dialogues among local religious leaders.

CONCLUSION

How should we assess the four interpretations of Khittah '26 in the light of this overview of NU's activities between 1984 and 1998? At one level all of the interpretations are to some degree correct and useful, as each has relevance for certain individuals and strata within NU. After all, at some point the intentions of those who originally conceived Khittah '26 become less important than the ways in which the various groups and leaders within NU have shaped it to their own purposes.

Thus, while one might argue that the first interpretation of Khittah '26 as presaging a sincere withdrawal from politics in order to focus on social and religious activities is almost laughable in the light of NU's subsequent political manoeuvring, that was precisely the intention of many of those involved in the original formulation of Khittah '26. Indeed, KH Sahal Mahfudz has lamented the various political interpretations of Khittah '26, insisting that it really was intended as a social and religious tool.⁵⁰ Certainly one can argue that during the New Order period, NU managed to establish a number of viable, thriving institutions that were fully engaged in economic, social and religious work. On the other hand, critics like Said Budairy argue that the level of effort put into these programs was far from adequate.⁵¹

The remaining three interpretations are more overtly or traditionally political. It must be acknowledged that whatever the intentions of those who originally formulated the Khittah '26 concept, NU remained very politically oriented throughout the New Order period. If one admits a political motivation for the Khittah '26 decision, then the question becomes, what was the political agenda of Khittah '26, and how was it implemented?

The interpretation in which NU would establish a separate political party does not require much time here, as the New Order regime would never have allowed this. Nevertheless it cannot be completely discounted, as the idea was revived after Soeharto's fall, as we shall see in the following two chapters. More interesting for our purposes are the remaining two options. Was Khittah '26 intended and/or did it evolve into a mechanism to facilitate a rapprochement between NU and Golkar? Was it intended and/or did it evolve into a means to oppose the regime? The answer may assist our understanding of later developments in NU's civil society discourse during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid.

Again, of course, the correct answer is that *in practice* Khittah '26 has been both an accommodationist and an oppositional tool in the hands of different actors, and in some instances in the hands of the same actor. It seems clear that for Abdurrahman Wahid, one of the central architects of Khittah '26 and perhaps the most influential figure in shaping its implementation, Khittah '26 was a political tool. He blatantly violated the two main principles designed to shift NU's focus from the political to the socio-religious: he upheld the continued supremacy of the Tanfidziyah, and he occupied political party positions while serving as an NU official.

What, then, was the political purpose of Khittah '26 according to Wahid — accommodation or opposition? In the mid to late 1990s, many NU activists and intellectuals held that Khittah '26 was a strategic manoeuvre, especially on the part of Abdurrahman Wahid, to obtain more freedom for NU to act politically, even oppositionally, within a political system that was growing increasingly restrictive. According to this argument, point (8) of the Khittah '26 decision — 'Nahdlatul Ulama as a social organization is not tied to any particular political organization or social organization' — was a strategy to circumvent the New Order's attempts to regulate political activity and political organizations through its Pancasila ideology, and gain more room for NU to manoeuvre politically.⁵² As NU intellectual Hairus Salim has argued:

There was no formal political platform that would have provided space for NU to rise politically. Thus, it was equally disadvantageous for NU to stay with PPP, or to join with Golkar or even PDI. The only way out, and the one that was more strategic for NU, was to conduct politics without a formal platform. This kind of politics does not require affiliation with the formal structures of political power ... it can be understood as politics outside the framework of the state (Hairus Salim 1999b: 87).

In short, by quitting the sphere of formal politics, NU activists were free to conduct grassroots empowerment and advocacy activities and expose the hegemonic nature of the New Order regime.

This explanation of Wahid's use of Khittah '26 hinged on a re-imagining — and subversion — of the New Order definition of the political. By withdrawing from the narrowly restricted, highly regulated political sphere of the New Order and instead acting in a political way in what both NU and the government accepted was the social sphere, NU, and Wahid, created a whole new understanding of what was political. Some academics and NU activists referred to this as the difference between 'formal' and 'informal' politics, while others referred to it as NU's 'cultural approach', but by the mid 1990s most agreed that NU had been political all along, and that it had created a new understanding of 'political' as being about 'raising the quality of life for the people, rather than just competing for seats in formal political institutions' (Amin 1999: 142).

The civil society discourse that emerged as a result of this increased 'room to manoeuvre' (*ruang gerak*) appears to meet at least two of Hefner's (2000: 36) criteria for civil society (see Chapter 1): the programs and publications of NU activists do affirm the 'principles of autonomy,

mutual respect, and voluntarism'; and their extensive grassroots activities do generalize these values 'beyond their original confines to a broader public sphere'. The third criterion, the support of 'various institutions, including the state', is harder to satisfy. One could argue that NU had far more freedom to criticize the regime and mobilize political participation as a social organization in the 1990s than it had ever had as a political party in the 1980s. Thus, while the New Order did not go so far as to 'support' its activities, at least it did not repress them as severely as it had when NU was a political party.

While it seems clear that NU's third-generation and civil society activists were able to subvert the New Order definition of 'political' (falling under the umbrella of state regulation) by manoeuvring 'politically' (in the sense of conducting social criticism), it can be argued that Wahid's own intentions lay much more within the realm of a traditional understanding of politics. In the first years after Situbondo, he appeared to use Khittah '26 to achieve a rapprochement with the regime. But later, when NU did not receive the rewards he had hoped for, and when his personal political enemies, the modernist Muslims, began to gain political power, he led the movement countering both the state and political Islam.

Meanwhile, the civil society movement led by NU's younger generation of intellectuals was gradually gaining in strength. Eventually it was to take on a life of its own and expand far beyond Wahid's own more immediate political purposes. Early indications that the movement that viewed Wahid as its founding father had outgrown him were evident in the outcry accompanying Wahid's courting of Soeharto and his daughter Tutut. The true test was to come in 1999, when Wahid would relinquish his commitment to keep NU out of formal politics and assume the presidency of Indonesia — on the wings of a coalition of his erstwhile enemies, the modernist Muslims. These events, and the response of the civil society movement, will be examined in the following two chapters.

Notes

1. Despite NU's large majority in the People's Representative Council (DPR) relative to the other three parties (NU: 61.7 per cent, Parmusi: 25.5 per cent, PSII: 10.6 per cent, Perti: 2.1 per cent), NU was given prestigious but not politically powerful positions within PPP. For example, KH Masykur was made chair of the Central Legal Council (Majelis Pertimbangan Pusat) and KH Bisri Syansuri

was made chair of the Advisory Council, yet the highly powerful position of head of the Jakarta branch of the party was given to Parmusi (Muawiyah 1996: 39; Haidar 1998: 202). Nevertheless, while KH Bisri Syansuri was alive, he commanded so much respect that there was little conflict within the party. His death in April 1980 was not only a tremendous loss for NU, but also marked the beginning of open tension within PPP (Yusuf, Syam and Mas'udi 1983: 66).

2. This was the label given to a number of indigenous, mystically oriented belief systems whose followers had been campaigning since the early 1970s for Kepercayaan to be considered an official religion. At the time, Kepercayaan was recognized by the Constitution as a cultural phenomenon but not a religion, thus excluding it from Department of Religion funds and protection (Ricklefs 2001: 354, 361). Under pressure from NU and other Muslim groups, Soeharto resisted the reclassification of Kepercayaan as a religion.
3. The bill tried to limit the ability of political parties to exploit the political appeal of Islam, for example by preventing PPP from using the Ka'bah as its party symbol. Party leaders felt that this was an infringement of their right to choose their own symbols and determine their own identity (Feillard 1999a: 214).
4. This was the second parliamentary walk-out led by KH Bisri Syansuri. He had also orchestrated a walk-out in 1973 over a government-sponsored marriage law that was perceived to undermine the authority of the *ulama*.
5. NU demanded that the proportion of DPR seats accorded by the 1977 elections be used as a standard for the 1982 submission, giving NU 56 seats, PSII 14 seats, MI five seats and Perti four seats. However, the three smaller parties wanted to be able to outvote NU if they pooled their votes, so they demanded a ratio that would give NU 49 seats, PSII 11 seats, MI 28 seats and Perti six seats (Marijan 1992: 116).
6. This criticism was not limited to Chalid; Nakamura (1996: 68–93) says that the regional leaders of NU were highly critical of the PBNU in general.
7. Members of the Cipete group included Anwar Musaddad, Ali Yafie, Amiruddin Aziz, Chalid Mawardi, Imam Sofwan and Nuddin Lubis. Members of the Situbondo group included KH Ali Ma'shum, KH As'ad Syamsul Arifin, KH Rodi Sholeh, Munasir, Chamid Widjaja, Masykur, Saifuddin Zuhri, Imron Rosjadi, Yusuf Hasyim, Abdurrahman Wahid, Mahbub Djunaedi, M. Zamroni and Chalik Ali (van Bruinessen 1994: 125, n. 6). The Situbondo group contained two subgroups: a group of 'radical' politicians (led by Yusuf Hasyim) who had recently been removed from their positions in the DPR due to their opposition to the regime; and a group of 'progressive' intellectuals (including Abdurrahman Wahid, Muchid Muzadi and Said Budairy) who were spearheading an intellectual revival within NU. These two groups would

eventually face off, but at this time were united in their efforts to have NU withdraw from PPP.

8. For a more extensive discussion of the events of this period, see Machfoedz (1982: 301–17), Yusuf, Syam and Mas'udi (1983: 77–117) and Feillard (1999a: 227–32).
9. See Machfoedz (1982: 269–74) on the internal debates surrounding the replacement of KH Bisri Syansuri by KH Ali Ma'shum as *rais am* of the Syuriah at the 1981 Munas.
10. Other terms used for this group in the literature on NU include 'new generation' and 'modernizers' (*pembaru*). According to Anas Saidi, quoted in Ida (1996: 91), members came from three main backgrounds: the 'new stock', or those who had graduated from public universities; the 'old stock', or those who had been educated in a *pesantren* or a State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN); and a third group consisting of IAIN graduates who had continued their studies in the Middle East.
11. The precise relationship of the third-generation leaders to the Situbondo versus Cipete camps is somewhat unclear. Mudhofi (1998: 76) argues that they were part of neither camp, and hence could be viewed as neutral and unbiased, but both van Bruinessen (1994: 117) and Feillard (1999a: 227) place them in the Situbondo camp. As will be seen in the ensuing pages, whether or not they formally belonged to it, their agenda closely matched that of the Situbondo group.
12. NU's factions have been categorized in a number of different ways. Machfoedz (1982) identifies three categories: (1) a group that wanted NU to remain in formal politics, led by Idham Chalid; (2) a group that wanted NU to withdraw from politics and return to the guidelines of 1926, including *ulama* such as KH Hamid Pasuruan, KH Achmad Siddiq and KH Ali Ma'shum; and (3) a group that supported the Khittah '26 movement but did not feel that this necessitated an abandonment of formal politics, exemplified by Yusuf Hasyim. Muawiyah (1996) identifies the same three categories but disagrees on the alignment of individuals. Most notably, she places Yusuf Hasyim in the second camp along with other Khittah '26 supporters such as KH Sahal Mahfudz and Abdurrahman Wahid. Ihsan (1990) also divides the NU leadership into three categories: (1) politicians, including members of both the Situbondo and Cipete camps; (2) *kiai*, again including members of both camps; and (3) modernizers such as Abdurrahman Wahid. The inability of analysts to agree on categories, or on the membership of each category, highlights the complexity of NU — simple dichotomies like 'politicians versus *ulama*' or 'Situbondo versus Cipete' do not tell the whole story.
13. Said Budairy, personal interview, 18 May 2000. In addition to Budairy, the most frequent participants in G Group meetings were Abdurrahman Wahid,

- Slamet Effendi Yusuf, Masdar Mas'udi, Ichwan Syam, Mustofa Zuhad and Fahmi Saifuddin (who was considered the 'manager' of the group).
14. Van Bruinessen (1994: 133) lists the entire 24 members of the council as Abdurrahman Wahid, KH Mustofa Bisri, Fahmi Saifuddin, Muhammad Thohir, KH Sahal Mahfudz, KH Muchid Muzadi, KH M. Zamroni, Mahbub Djunaidi, Abdullah Syarwani, Said Budairi, Slamet Effendi Yusuf, Masdar F. Mas'udi, Asip Hadipranata, Tolhah Hasan, HM Munasir, Sjaiful Mudjab, Umar Basalim, Cholil Musaddad, Ghaffar Rahman, Mohammad Ichwan Syam, Musa Abdillah, Mustofa Zuhad, Danial Tanjung and Achmad Bagdja.
 15. The members of the team were Abdurrahman Wahid, M. Zamroni, Said Budairi, Mahbub Djunaidi, Fahmi Saifuddin, Danial Tanjung and Achmad Bagdja (van Bruinessen 1994: 134). See also Marijan (1992: 140–1) for a discussion of both the Council of 24 and the Team of Seven.
 16. According to both Said Budairi and Slamet Effendi Yusuf, the team was unable to work together in an effective manner because of the differences between the members chosen for their close association with PBNU leader Idham Chalid and the other members. Therefore, just a few days before the deadline, Slamet Effendi Yusuf, Said Budairi and Masdar Mas'udi got together and essentially produced the treatise on behalf of the entire team (Slamet Effendi Yusuf, personal interview, 13 December 1999; Said Budairi, personal interview, 18 May 2000).
 17. The state ideology of Pancasila is discussed in Chapter 2. Originally conceptualized by Soekarno, it was later resuscitated by Soeharto as an instrument of organizational control. His 1982 decree that all mass organizations and socio-political organizations must have Pancasila as their sole foundational principle was seen largely as an effort to corral the potential of Islam as an oppositional force.
 18. Said Budairi, personal interview, 18 May 2000.
 19. According to Miftach (1994: 43), Wahid maintained his opposition to Pancasila as the sole foundational principle of NU even at the ensuing Muktamar. Given Wahid's many public expressions in favour of Pancasila, including calling it 'the foundation of secular democracy', it seems likely that he rejected any linking of Pancasila and sharia because that would formalize the latter within the political system — something he was strongly opposed to (see Ramage 1996: 227–56).
 20. See Ramage (1996: 20) for more details on Siddiq's argument as expressed at the Munas.
 21. For a more detailed examination of Siddiq's line of argumentation, see Barton (1996). For a different angle on the relationship between Pancasila and NU's theological beliefs, written by a Christian theologian and based largely on the writings of al-Ghazali, see Sitompul (1989: 168–87).

22. For a text of the revised NU constitution, see PBNU (1984: 112).
23. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed explanation of *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*.
24. See Haryono (1990: 82), Mudhofi (1998: 86–7) and Hairus Salim (1999a: 215–8) for almost identical articulations of the following four interpretations.
25. See Marijan (1992: 158), Ida (1996: 95) and Mudhofi (1998: 88).
26. See Marijan (1992: 161–70) for a detailed description of the ‘war of *fatwa*’ that took place between NU supporters of Golkar and NU supporters of PPP, as well as the messy local political manoeuvres carried out in the name of destroying PPP in the 1987 elections. He lists as the primary actors in this effort Mahbub Junaidi, Yusuf Hasyim, Safii Sulaiman, KH Shohib Bisri, Hasyim Latief and KH Imron Hamzah.
27. See Marijan (1992: 170–9), who provides tables of the election results for 1977, 1982 and 1987, broken down by party and by province.
28. The last offence was potentially the most damaging to Wahid. He was involved with an NGO that had sent a letter to the World Bank criticizing the government. Because the letter was reportedly his idea, Wahid was forced to apologize to the president for this lapse. After a marked improvement in their economic welfare following years of being disciplined for their opposition to the regime, NU leaders were not willing at this point to risk being sanctioned again. See van Bruinessen (1994: 186–7) for a description of this incident.
29. One of Wahid’s opponents, Ali Yafie, argued that this returned the Tanfidziyah to the position it had held while NU was a political party, in effect negating one of the principles of the Khittah ’26 movement (Ida 1996: 106).
30. This statement can be interpreted as an implicit rejection of the interpretation of Khittah ’26 as a way of securing the withdrawal of NU from PPP in order to affiliate itself with Golkar, and as an implicit criticism of the deflating of the PPP vote in 1987 (Mudhofi 1998: 99).
31. For example, Ghaffar Rahman was named secretary general of the Tanfidziyah with Achmad Bagdja and Mustofa Zuhad as his deputies, while Fahmi Saifuddin, Tolhah Hasan and Rozy Munir were all named deputy chairs of the Tanfidziyah. KH Achmad Siddiq was re-elected to the position of *rais am* of the Syuriah and KH Mahruf Amin was elected to the position of Syuriah secretary (PBNU 1989: 191–2). Another significant appointment to the new PBNU board was that of Mahbub Djunaidi to the Mustasyar. While this is generally considered a purely nominal position, it was significant that he was given anything at all considering his efforts to topple Wahid in 1987. Observers at the time concluded that this concession was made as a quiet gesture of appreciation for Djunaidi’s role in leading the ‘deflating’ of the PPP vote (Mudhofi 1998: 97).
32. Soeharto’s role in establishing and supporting ICMI is often seen by non-modernist scholars as an attempt to co-opt and manipulate Islam for political purposes, although at the time it was presented by Soeharto’s minister of

- religion as an indication of Soeharto's 'victory' over political Islam (Ramage 1995: 78).
33. This attempt was engineered by the Rembang faction of NU politicians within PPP, so called because they held a meeting in Rembang in June to plan the takeover, and because they counted KH Cholil Bisri of Rembang as a member. Other members were Matori Abdul Djalil, Nadhir Muhammad, Chozin Chumaedy and Abdurrahman Wahid. Miftach (1994: 20) describes the Rembang faction as the 'radical' faction within PPP, partly because they were not PPP 'insiders' and partly because of the conflict between them and long-time PPP leaders Idham Chalid and Yusuf Hasyim.
 34. See Kadir (1999: 243–50) for a thorough examination of the strengths and weaknesses of these programs.
 35. For a description of these events, see Kadir (1999: 335–48, 354–6), Wahid, Ghazali and Suwendi (1999: 77–85) and Hefner (2000: 193–6).
 36. Wahid also escorted Tutut to four NU rallies in Central and East Java. Kadir (1999: 342–3) notes that special care was taken to avoid the appearance of overt campaigning by Golkar at these events; for example, there were no flags or banners in Golkar's signature yellow. Hefner (2000) argues convincingly that Wahid's actions during the final years of the New Order, including his reconciliation with Soeharto, were intended not so much to repair relations with the president as to thwart the ascension to power of his primary enemies — the modernist Muslims of ICMI. He had some success in this regard: after the 'safari' tour, Tutut ordered a thinktank composed of ultraconservative elements of ICMI to stop criticizing Wahid, at which point the thinktank disbanded. See Hefner (2000: 193–6) on Wahid's reconciliation with Soeharto, and Hefner (2000: Ch. 7) on the broader realignments that were taking place in the years leading up to Soeharto's fall. For an 'inside' look at Wahid's own thinking and rationale for these manoeuvres, see Barton (2002: 221–4).
 37. For example, Syafiq Hasyim, Ahmad Suaedy and Burhan were protégés of Masdar Mas'udi, executive director of P3M; Ulil Abshar-Abdalla was the son of KH Mustofa Bisri; and Hidayaturohman was a protégé of Ghaffar Rahman, the head of Maarif NU in the late 1990s.
 38. For a discussion of tolerance and pluralism as central Sunni tenets of NU, see van Bruinessen (1996), Fealy (1998: Ch. 3) and Haidar (1998).
 39. The main figures in this movement on the traditionalist side were Abdurrahman Wahid, Masdar Mas'udi, Abdullah Syarwani, Fahmi Saifuddin and Nasihin Hasan. On the modernist side, the most prominent figures were Adi Sasono, Dawam Rahardjo, Sudjoko Prasodjo, Moeslim Abdurrahman and Aswab Mahmin. According to van Bruinessen (1994: 239), Wahid and Dawam Rahardjo were unable to get along, and their attempts to work together only heightened the tension between them. According to Mas'udi, the enmity between Wahid

and Adi Sasono also dated from this time (Masdar Mas'udi, personal interview, 14 May 1999).

40. For an exhaustive examination of the political and historical dimensions of this terminology, and of constructions of 'civil society' in modernist and traditionalist circles, see Baso (1999b). Another excellent resource that explores developments in civil society discourse in both modernist and traditionalist circles is Prasetyo and Munhanif (2002).
41. It should be noted that Nurcholish was speaking in the mid 1990s, when the prospect of the New Order regime being toppled by civil society seemed remote. Certainly conditions were very different two years later, when it could be argued that civil society did in fact play a central role in toppling Soeharto.
42. In typical NU fashion, Billah (2001: 79–80, n. 24) comments that the 'Islamization' of the bureaucracy at this time was largely symbolic; for instance, although *assalamu'alaikum* had become a common greeting at official events, corruption was rampant in the Department of Religion. See Tanthowi (2004) for a discussion of the Hegelian (Muhammadiyah) versus Tocquevillian (NU) approaches to defining 'civil society' during this period.
43. Arskal Salim expressed similar views during numerous conversations I had with him in 1999 and early 2000.
44. Many local *kiai* and regional NU leaders were more positively inclined towards a greater role for Islam in the political and social system. Surprisingly, many of them were unaware of, or underestimated, the strength of Wahid's opposition to the politicization of Islam; one local *kiai* reportedly said at a P3M training session: 'I support Gus Dur; I've always liked him because he stands for an Islamic state'.
45. See Hefner (2000: Chs 6 and 7) for a description of the way in which Soeharto courted and manipulated both modernist and traditionalist Islam, and played them off against each other.
46. See Chapter 1 for a discussion of these terms, and Abdillah (1999: 6) for a succinct overview of the ways in which the various categories were used by both traditionalist and modernist intellectuals in the late 1990s.
47. At its 1992 Munas in Lampung, NU did in fact significantly broaden its official stance on *taqlid* (reliance on the judgments of the *mazhab* rather than on personal interpretation of the scriptures) to allow it to mean following one of the 'methods' of thinking embodied in the *mazhab*, rather than uncritical acceptance of the decisions themselves (van Bruinessen 1996: 188). Muhtadi (2004: 122–36) provides a fascinating account of the way in which the doctrine of *ahlussunnah wal jamaah* has been reinterpreted over the years. In recent years, for example, it has been used to argue against an Islamic state, and to emphasize the pluralism and complexity of religious belief.
48. Taken from material produced by LKiS for its training sessions.

49. My deepest thanks to Ibu Lilis Husna and the late Bapak Maskyur Maskub of Lakpesdam for inviting me to attend this workshop as an outside observer.
50. KH Sahal Mahfudz, personal interview, 8 October 1999.
51. As noted earlier in this chapter, many of NU's social and economic programs failed. Budairiy (1998: 47–58) accuses Wahid of mismanaging many of these programs, and of not fulfilling many of the grandiose promises he made. For example, he claims that Wahid's promise to train 10,000 social and economic development workers was never fulfilled, and that very few of the rural credit banks he promised were actually established.
52. See Hikam (1994), Muzadi (1994) and Wahid, Ghazali and Suwendi (1999).

4

NU and *Reformasi*: Political Developments from 1998 to 2001

As the economic crisis hit Indonesia in 1997–98 and the New Order faltered, NU's stance towards the regime was characteristically divided between accommodation by the leadership and vocal criticism by younger members, with a range of opinions and attitudes in between. During the early post-New Order period of reform (*reformasi*),¹ these structural and ideological conflicts continued to stand in the way of the development of a coherent stance towards the changes that were transforming Indonesia's political landscape. After the fall of Soeharto, the old Masyumi–NU tensions resurfaced in a new form with the strong resurgence of political Islam. Partly to counter this development, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) was persuaded to form the National Awakening Party (PKB), despite 15 years of campaigning to keep NU out of formal politics. Deepening the irony, he then entered the race for the

country's presidency, not as his own party's candidate, but as the nominee of a coalition of primarily modernist Islamic parties.

Wahid's path to the presidency was marked by further incoherence within NU, with some *kiai* and the cultural Islam wing of NU opposing his nomination but NU politicians supporting it. After being elected president, Wahid proceeded with the same style of leadership he had displayed while leading NU — making appointments based on personal relationships, acting without consulting allies and issuing controversial statements. His alienation of parliament and of his popular vice president led to his downfall in July 2001. One byproduct of his presidency was a further exacerbation of the 'Masyumi-NU' conflict — to the point of violence — and a further consolidation of the political power of the modernist Muslim parties.

THE FALL OF SOEHARTO AND THE INTERIM HABIBIE PRESIDENCY

The economic crisis that hit Asia in 1997 brought much more than financial turmoil to Indonesia — it triggered a period of social and political upheaval that toppled one of Asia's longest-lasting authoritarian rulers, President Soeharto.² For NU as well, it was a period of internal confusion and conflict, with some parts of the organization remaining loyal to the president and others taking an active part in the efforts to topple him. The disparate views among the bodies representing the generational, gender and educational differences in NU were perhaps more pronounced than ever in the months leading up to Soeharto's resignation. NU's older generation exhibited its usual inherent caution towards political change and continued to maintain the same accommodationist approach it had taken in the latter years of the New Order. The youth and student branches of NU, meanwhile, were increasingly involved in the student reform movement that was to play a central role in toppling Soeharto. These divisions were exacerbated by the absence of a strong leader and unifying spokesperson, as Wahid was ill for much of this period. He suffered a stroke on 20 January 1998 that left him almost blind, and was in hospital until 23 March. He made no public statements until 20 April 1998, and even then kept an uncharacteristically low profile.

In early January 1998, a group of 200 *ulama* from *pesantren* scattered across Java, Madura and Sumatra had journeyed to Jakarta to present Soeharto with over a kilogram of gold from their personal coffers, a

dramatic gesture indicating their support for the beleaguered president. Shortly after this, Adi Sasono, the secretary general of ICMI, invited Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati Soekarnoputri — then president of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) — and Amien Rais (the head of Muhammadiyah) to join ICMI in a ‘national dialogue’ to form a common platform of criticism of the regime. In one of his last public statements before he became ill, Wahid refused, saying that what Muslims from the lower layers of society — that is, NU members — needed was not dialogue, but an improvement in their socio-economic well-being.³ This response did not come as a surprise to most observers given Wahid’s personal antipathy towards Amien Rais and his public opposition to ICMI, as well as his well-publicized reconciliation with Soeharto in early 1997 (see Chapter 3).

In the weeks and months leading up to the presidential elections scheduled for 10 March 1998, the GMNU — a coalition of Ansor (NU’s youth wing), Fatayat NU (for young women), PMII (for university students) and IPNU and IPPNU (for male and female high school students respectively) — struck a decidedly more critical tone towards the regime. This divergence was expressed most strikingly at the respective post-Ramadan gatherings of the GMNU and the PBNU in late February.⁴ The GMNU’s gathering was a high-energy affair attended by swarms of press and young activists. The presence of Banser, Ansor’s paramilitary unit, added an edge to the evening, as did the yells of ‘We want a new president!’ from the audience during the reading of the GMNU’s official statement. The statement itself was unusually forthright:

The closed and centralized political system has shut off the possibility of criticism and control by the public. ... The people are experiencing a crisis of trust (the lack thereof) in our government. ... We demand reform in the areas of economics, politics and culture.⁵

Only at the end did the statement rather weakly tack on an acknowledgement that the GMNU ‘resisted any divergence from the Constitution’. This final element was clearly a concession to the official NU line, expressed at the PBNU gathering the next morning.

In striking contrast to the carnival atmosphere of the night before, the PBNU’s gathering was subdued. The 30–40 NU leaders who showed up were offered boxed snacks and sat quietly in their seats during a short sermon given by *rais am* of the Syuriah KH Ilyas Ruchiyat. This was followed by the reading of an official statement affirming that NU ‘supports the

Constitution' and that 'the nomination of the president and vice president must follow constitutional processes and mechanisms'.⁶ The statement strongly forbade members from making presidential or vice presidential nominations in contravention of the formal election procedures then in effect. This last stricture was issued in the context of mounting criticism of the electoral system, in which organizations and public figures were making independent nominations of alternative presidential candidates with increasing frequency. The Central Java chapter of NU had reportedly issued several such nominations, and was thus being brought firmly back into line.

March went by; Soeharto was elected to a seventh five-year term with no official comment from the PBNU; and NU's activists and students continued to agitate against the regime. Leaders of PMII spoke openly to me of making trips to the villages to 'heat up' (*mengomporin*) the situation and keep the fires of criticism and opposition stoked. My sense at the time was that there was an implicit understanding between the PBNU and PMII — that while the board could not publicly condone the latter's activities, it was prepared to turn a blind eye and even quietly support its efforts. Finally, in mid April 1998, Tanfidziyah secretary general Achmad Bagdja and Syuriah *rais am* KH Ilyas Ruchiyat broke their silence. They issued a statement saying that NU viewed *reformasi* as an 'improvement' or, indeed, 'reform' (*islah*), and that opposing reform was the same thing as opposing the path (*sunnah*) of God.⁷ This statement was welcomed with some surprise by activist and opposition groups. However, only four days later Abdurrahman Wahid came out of his long, illness-induced silence to declare that the student demonstrations (which by then were taking place on a daily basis) had no firm intellectual basis. He claimed to have evidence that the student movement was being organized by a third party and had been infiltrated by paid agents — a statement that was quickly denied and largely laughed off by the student leaders.⁸ This kind of statement, which reflected Wahid's poor mental state, was to become more and more commonplace in coming months.

The autonomous bodies and central and regional chapters of NU continued to disagree on how to deal with the growing economic and political crises. This was evident at the biannual planning meetings of the East Java chapters of Ansor and Fatayat NU in Surabaya at the end of April 1998, which I attended. On one side, the governor of East Java, Basofi, and the head of East Java military operations expressed loyalty to Soeharto; on the other side, economist Tjuk Sukiadi and political

scientist Martono expressed criticism of the regime and its handling of the economic crisis. Anzor eventually reached a consensus that it would pursue reform within the framework of an armed forces/Basofi initiative emphasizing small-scale agribusiness as the key to rescuing Indonesia from the economic crisis. However, Fatayat NU sounded a more political tone, arguing that ‘we shouldn’t rely too much on the system — that is what needs to be changed’. But while calling for Soeharto to be replaced, Fatayat NU’s members declined to take any overt political action, insisting that as women ‘we are not capable (*mampu*) of playing politics’.⁹

Anzor is the place where young potential leaders of NU establish a reputation and gain leadership experience at the local level. As such, it has traditionally maintained close relationships with local power brokers such as the military, local government officials and party leaders. It is therefore not surprising that Anzor rejected a directly oppositional stance in favour of working with the established powers, and preferred social and economic action to overt political action. Fatayat NU, on the other hand, has always been somewhat less dependent on relationships with the government and the military, because its activities are less politically oriented. This has allowed it to be more independently critical of the regime. On the other hand, it has also prevented it from participating actively in formal politics, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Fall of Soeharto

In mid May 1998, President Soeharto cut short a trip to Cairo to return to Indonesia amidst widespread calls for him to step down — something he had promised to do if the ‘people had lost trust in him’. When he tried to renege on this promise, the PBNU issued a statement politely but firmly welcoming Soeharto’s promise to step down, and indicating that he should stick to that promise.¹⁰

With the end of the Soeharto era now seeming inevitable, intellectuals, critics and religious leaders began to prepare for a post-Soeharto era. Two different groups were established within a few days of each other in May 1998: the People’s Mandate Council (MAR) and the Indonesian Working Forum (FKI). They had much in common: they both consisted of 30–50 major public figures and they both had the same purpose — to establish the framework for a post-Soeharto era. While FKI contained a large NU contingent, PDI-P’s Megawati Soekarnoputri and Muhammadiyah’s Amien Rais were also involved in its formation.¹¹ But just a few days

before FKI's founders were due to hold a press conference announcing its official establishment, Rais pre-empted them by announcing the formation of MAR.¹² When asked by reporters why Megawati and Wahid were not involved in MAR, Rais responded that they had been invited to participate. However, Wahid insisted that he at least had not been approached.¹³

Kompas ran an article noting that while Amien Rais, Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri were all stated founders of FKI, only Wahid and Megawati had officially signed the statement announcing its establishment.¹⁴ Although the sweep of history has already almost obscured the existence of both FKI and MAR, these events provide yet another example of the tension between NU (the traditionalists) and Muhammadiyah (the modernists), which made even a cooperative opposition movement impossible.

On 12 May 1998, a group of 40 senior NU *kiai* from all over Indonesia met to draft a letter to be presented to President Soeharto upon his return from Cairo. Wahid told me that the letter asked the president to take responsibility for the situation the country found itself in and step down — that if he did not, his fate would be in the hands of God.¹⁵ This rather foreboding edict was obviously at strong variance with the *kiai*'s earlier expression of trust in the president, when they had given him their gold.

On 19 May 1998, after being closeted for two hours with various Islamic leaders — including Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid but notably not Amien Rais — Soeharto announced that he would not step down immediately, but would form a reform committee (*komite reformasi*) to supervise new elections to be held as soon as possible. He further promised not to run again for the presidency. Wahid's response was that this was a positive compromise, that to do things according to the Constitution took time, that Indonesians should be patient and give the president that time — and in the meantime the students should stop demonstrating.¹⁶ But the students did not stop demonstrating and the president's offer was rejected as unacceptable by most groups.¹⁷ Meitzner (2008) notes that Wahid's presence at this meeting was crucial to Soeharto's efforts to establish his own exit plan, and that the exclusion of Amien Rais ultimately allowed the latter to maintain his reputation as the true leader of the reform effort.

After a couple of tense days during which thousands of students occupied the parliamentary building and grounds, the speaker of the DPR, Harmoko, issued an ultimatum to the president saying that if he did not step down by Friday, he would call a special session of parliament to

impeach him. The following day, 21 May 1998, Soeharto announced his resignation, passing the presidency over to his vice president, B.J. Habibie. NU had profound ideological differences with Habibie, the founder of ICMI and its leader from 1990 until 2000. Nevertheless, Wahid urged NU members to put aside their personal differences with Habibie and accept him as president, because his ascendancy to the presidency had been in accordance with the Constitution. The most important thing, he said, was to preserve the law and the constitutional basis of the country, and restore some degree of calm so that people could go about their daily business.¹⁸ But despite Wahid's public statements, the younger generation of NU was outraged that a man who was almost an icon of modernist Islam now occupied the most powerful position in the land.

The Interim Habibie Presidency

On 22 May 1998, the day after Habibie was sworn in as the third President of Indonesia, the student activists who had been occupying the parliamentary compound decided to stay there in protest against the new president, whom they saw as just an extension of the Soeharto regime. NU was strongly represented among the student groups, with IPNU, IPPNU and PMII activists camped out in front of parliament flying NU flags. At about 1:30 p.m., just after Friday prayers, several thousand Habibie supporters advanced onto the grounds, chanting Islamic slogans, bearing Islamic symbols and flying banners declaring their support for the new president. 'For Habibie and for Islam!' they yelled.¹⁹ The students confronted them, trying to force them to leave the grounds. Physical conflict very nearly broke out, but was averted, and the pro-Habibie supporters were permitted to put up some of their banners on the walls of the parliament.

This marked one of the few times since the Soekarno era that a political demonstration had been held publicly in the name of Islam in Indonesia. That in itself seemed to jolt the Muslim community, and inspired a flurry of public warnings against using Islam as a political tool. NU activists viewed it as confirmation that their warnings about the tendency of modernist Muslims to manipulate Islamic symbols for political gain were right on the mark. Both the PBNU and the GMNU issued public statements the following day condemning the use of Islam as a political tool and stating that 'no one group has the right to claim to represent all Muslims, and to use Islam to oppose society, students and the pro-democracy movement'.²⁰ At the same time, the confrontation provided yet another instance of

the remarkable diversity of opinion within NU, as several members of Ansor were spotted marching with the pro-Habibie group alongside such traditional NU enemies as the Islamic Students Association (HMI), the Indonesian Committee for World Islamic Solidarity (KISDI), the Islamic Youth Movement (GPI) and other more hardline modernist student groups.²¹

The following day, PMII, IPNU and IPPNU held an anti-Habibie 'long march', which I joined with some trepidation given the rows of soldiers bearing M-16s lining the streets. As we marched, I asked those around me what they hoped to achieve. Their agenda was straightforward: 'to remove Habibie because he's too close to Soeharto and his presidency is unconstitutional' — the latter based on the tenuous argument that he had been sworn in by the Supreme Court rather than by parliament. When I asked them who they would prefer to see in the presidency they didn't know — 'We just want Habibie out', they said.

I also asked the students if they weren't concerned about the apparent conflict between their decision to demonstrate and Wahid's public instructions to the NU membership. Sa'dun, one of the IPNU leaders, denied there was any conflict, saying that Wahid's statement was not 'pro-Habibie' but 'pro-Constitution'. He interpreted the students' actions as being in line with this, because they too were calling for a constitutional solution — in the form of new elections. On the other hand, he continued, the Ansor members who had joined the pro-Habibie march on the previous day had violated the official policy as set out by Wahid. Later I spoke to other NU activists close to the PBNU who seemed to feel that the march was in fact a violation of Wahid's policy; they referred to the students as 'naughty kids' (*anak-anak nakal*).²² Moreover, there was some division within PMII itself about how to interpret Wahid's statements; I spoke to one member who declined to join the march because he felt this would not be in line with Wahid's call for a cooling-off period.²³

THE FORMATION OF PKB

Agitation for an NU Party

In preparation for the elections scheduled for June 1999, Muslim organizations joined the rest of the nation in a frenzy of political party formation. In only a few months, the number of Islam-based parties

in Indonesia mushroomed from one to 42.²⁴ Many of the politicians in NU, sidelined since the 1984 Khittah '26 decision, saw this as a perfect opportunity to bring the organization back into formal politics. As new parties formed around them almost daily, politicians and *kiai* alike began to clamour for NU to form its own party.

It was not long before some groups began to take matters into their own hands and form parties representing the various regional and sectoral interests of NU; in the end, four NU-affiliated parties would contest the elections. As early as 28 May 1998, KH Noer Iskandar and KH Hasyim Muzadi announced the formation of the Nine Star Party (PBS) at Iskander's *pesantren* in Jakarta to represent NU leaders anxious to return to the world of party politics. The East and Central Java provincial branches of NU immediately declared their support for this move, while a more circumspect PBNU took it 'under consideration'.²⁵ Two days later, a small group from the Central Java branch called on the PBNU to form an 'official' NU political party to represent the entire organization.²⁶ The following day NU held a public prayer rally (*istigotsah*) in Surabaya at which East Java branch leaders again demanded that the central board form a party. This was deemed necessary to correct the history of injustices towards NU members that had resulted from its lack of representation in recent cabinets. The head of the East Java branch of the Pesantren Institute (RMI), KH Chusnul Huda, later clarified this as follows: 'The desire of NU members to form a party is not solely because NU was not given cabinet seats. Whether or not NU is given cabinet seats, it will still work for justice'.²⁷ *Kompas* reported in June 1998 that no less than ten NU-affiliated organizations had petitioned the PBNU to form a party.²⁸

Wahid at first attempted to deflect these requests. He was quoted in the press as saying:

If there are NU members who want to participate in a party, go ahead. But NU will remain an organization that isn't involved in formal politics. NU must remain true to its guidelines (*tetap kembali ke khittah*). Moreover, it doesn't need to establish a political party. Nevertheless, all NU members should await official guidelines from the PBNU on this matter ('Pak UD Larang NU Jadi Partai', *Sinar Pagi*, 1 June 1998: 1).

Apparently this is a watered-down version of what he actually said. According to the then deputy secretary general of the Syuriah, Said Aqil Siradj, Wahid originally wrote that NU members who wanted to participate

politically 'should join only PBNU-approved parties' (not that they should 'go ahead'), the implication being that the board would 'approve' parties but would not form its own party. However, Siradj changed this to leave the latter possibility open, because he was convinced of the immense popularity an NU party would have.²⁹

Wahid's statement was not enough to stop the huge demand for political parties representing NU interests, especially in East Java. On 5 June 1998, KH Hasib Wahab of Jombang, East Java, established the Awakening of Muslim Believers party (NUM) to 'represent the aspirations of NU'.³⁰ The next day, 70 senior *kiai* from across Java, Kalimantan and Aceh met at the *pesantren* of KH Cholil Bisri in Rembang, Central Java, to discuss the growing demands for NU to become more actively involved in the political process. Bisri, known for his frustration with NU's policy of eschewing formal politics, noted that NU had been 'fasting' for 30 years and said that it was now time to 'break the fast'.³¹ The *kiai* reached a consensus that serious and careful consideration should be given to establishing an NU party, and formed an 11-member team to consider the proposal further.³²

Only two weeks later, the PBNU formed its own five-member team³³ charged with taking the preliminary steps towards forming a party — thus avoiding direct involvement, which might have been seen as a violation of *Khittah* '26.³⁴ Deputy secretary general of the Tanfidziyah Arifin Junaidi acknowledged that the PBNU had received over 80 separate requests to form a party, pressure that he felt the board could no longer ignore. Wahid too appears to have mellowed on the idea. He ruminated briefly in public about the possibility of creating a joint nationalist party with Megawati Soekarnoputri,³⁵ while emphasizing that this was something he was considering as an individual, separate from the efforts of NU to create a party. This may have been just another delaying or diversionary tactic on Wahid's part — the momentum for NU to create or become a party would surely falter if its top leader was to found another party, or so the logic went.

The Reaction of NU Activists

Wahid was not the only one to be less than enthusiastic about the prospect of NU forming a political party; many of his long-time cadre of friends and followers in the NGO movement were also deeply ambivalent or even distressed about this development. After struggling for the past 15 years

to distance NU from the formal political system so that it could serve as a moral watchdog on the state, they felt that affiliation with a party would undermine NU's neutrality and its identity as a civil society force.

In just one example of the many meetings that were taking place at the time, on 2 June 1998 a group of senior NU officials from LKKNU, Ma'arif NU, P3M, Lakpesdam and the PBNU met to discuss the ramifications of recent political developments for NU's civil society programs. Discussion quickly turned to the implications of NU's proposed return to politics.³⁶ While those present were generally opposed to such a move, Said Aqil Siradj, representing the PBNU, insisted that if NU were to form a party, it would have to be controlled by the board. Lakpesdam director Ulil Abshar-Abdalla and Ma'arif NU director Ghaffar Rahman disagreed, saying that NU should have only indirect influence over such a party. Fazrul Falaakh (member of the PBNU and director of Lakpesdam) and A.S. Hikam (LIPI analyst and friend and advisor to Wahid) both argued strongly that the PBNU should not be affiliated with any political party, as this would violate Khittah '26. Hikam followed this up later by saying to me:

If NU becomes a party, its civil society role will be destroyed because it will become part of the state. Actually I don't believe that we have seen total *reformasi*; I think we are seeing a consolidation of the *ancien regime*. ... Under these circumstances, it is more important than ever to retain a view of Khittah '26 as a strategy, which means that forming parties is even more dangerous.³⁷

The Establishment of PKB

Despite the objections that were being expressed, and the attempts by the PBNU to both delay and control the process, the momentum in favour of forming a party eventually became too strong to resist. Pragmatically, Wahid chose to take the reins of this movement rather than see a fragmentation of the NU vote across numerous Muslim, including NU-affiliated, parties. On the night of 23 July 1998, at Wahid's Ciganjur residence, between three and four thousand NU members and sympathizers gathered to witness the official birth of PKB. Wahid was one of the five 'declarers' of the party, along with KH Munasir Ali, KH Mustofa Bisri, KH Muchid Muzadi and KH Ilyas Ruchiyat.³⁸ The party was structured along very similar lines to NU itself, with an Executive Council and Advisory Council mirroring NU's Tanfidziyah and Syuriah. Matori Abdul Djalil was appointed chair

of the party, Muhaimin Iskandar (Wahid's nephew) became secretary general, Imam Churmen treasurer and KH Ma'ruf Amin head of the Advisory Council. The full line-up of the original PKB leadership is shown in Appendix 3.

At the time, many observers expressed surprise at the choice of Matori Abdul Djalil as head of the party. He was viewed by many *kiai* as not having adequate religious credentials,³⁹ and he did not have a large mass base (as would, for example, the heads of Ansor or Muslimat NU). The conventional wisdom within NU activist circles was that he was chosen for his loyalty to Wahid, who thought he would be able to control him.⁴⁰ Indeed, a senior member of Fatayat NU who was staying with Wahid's family during the days preceding the declaration of PKB told me that Wahid had appointed the entire leadership line-up with little or no outside consultation — a claim that Matori confirmed to me in an interview four years later.⁴¹

The party platform emphasizes PKB's NU identity, describing it as a party that 'sprang from the womb of NU' (PKB 1998: iii). This document cites an important NU treatise, *Khittah Nahdliyah* [Guidelines for NU Members], as a source of inspiration. However, the rest of the platform provides very little indication that the party is in any way associated with a religious organization. It says that PKB is committed to developing an 'Indonesian society which is just, peaceful, democratic and civilized', which 'views Indonesia's pluralism as a national treasure' and which 'strives for the sovereignty of the Indonesian people, democracy, social justice and prosperity for all Indonesians' (PKB 1998: 4). Printed in both Indonesian and English, the platform sets out fairly generic positions on matters of politics, economy, law, social affairs, culture, education, religion, national defence, foreign policy, labour, land issues, women and the environment.

In the only indication that the liberal persuasions of Matori and Wahid, who were closely involved in the construction of the platform, may have been tempered by more conservative elements (probably within the Syuriah), a single line in the section on religion had been crossed out manually in black marker pen in all copies of both the Indonesian and English versions that I saw. Thus, following the statement that 'PKB recognizes and respects the pluralism of religion and faith in Indonesia', and still legible beneath the black ink, is a sentence reading: 'PKB strives for and guarantees freedom of religion and faith' (PKB 1998: 15). While I asked numerous people about this post-publication editing, no one was

willing to admit knowledge of who was responsible for the change. This is nevertheless an interesting and stark manifestation of one of the internal struggles that has plagued PKB since its formation — the struggle between those who wanted it to be an open, inclusive party and those who wanted it to have a more distinctly Islamic tone.⁴²

THE RESPONSE OF FATAYAT NU AND MUSLIMAT NU TO THE FORMATION OF PKB

The responses of two of NU's autonomous bodies, Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU, to the formation of PKB affords an interesting insight into some of the important issues raised by this development, and into internal NU dynamics at this time. Neither organization was initially very enthusiastic about PKB's formation (for different reasons), and both were to be chastised by the PBNU for their lack of solidarity.

The Response of Fatayat NU

As a subsidiary organization (*underbouw*) of NU, Fatayat NU is expected to toe the line. In the weeks leading up to the establishment of PKB, it expressed neither support for nor opposition to the new party. Its silence became more pointed when it became the only autonomous body not to send a message of congratulations to the PBNU after the gala declaration of the new party. When asked why, Fatayat NU claimed it was just being 'passive'.⁴³

When I asked various members of Fatayat NU about their apparent lack of enthusiasm for the new party, the answers I received all touched on the fear that NU would divert its energies to politics and neglect its social activities, in violation of Khittah '26. The culture of opposition to political involvement has always been strong within Fatayat NU, as mentioned earlier. So when one Fatayat NU member did begin to get involved with PKB, other senior members chided her, saying 'Don't forget, you are Fatayat NU, so you shouldn't be getting involved in politics like that. Remember, the important thing is Khittah '26, and social activities'.⁴⁴ The invocation of Khittah '26 and concern about NU shifting its focus away from social activities were a logical consequence of Fatayat NU's concentration on grant-funded activities like gender awareness training and community health work in the years since Khittah '26 was implemented. These sources

of income and prestige might be undercut if NU was to require its members to focus primarily on supporting a political party.⁴⁵

The question of whether or not the formation of PKB violated the Khittah '26 decision was often raised at this time. The standard reply was that given by *rais am* KH Ilyas Ruchiyat in Cirebon three days after the party's formation:

PKB is not an autonomous body [of NU], but rather a project of NU, ... therefore the establishment of PKB does not violate Khittah '26 ('Rois Am PBNU: PKB tak Bertentangan dengan Khittah', *Republika*, 27 July 1998: 2).

Here Khittah '26 is interpreted very literally as restricting NU *as an organization* from participating in party politics. The leaders of both PKB and NU therefore emphasized the separateness and autonomy of the two (although this would change, as will be shown later). A more sophisticated defence was provided by Yayuk, the chair of Fatayat NU's East Java branch. She argued that one must distinguish between 'strategy' and 'operation'. The strategy underlying Khittah '26 was to preserve NU. In 1984 the best way of putting that strategy into operation was to withdraw from formal politics, but in the present circumstances the strategy of survival was best pursued by engaging in party politics.⁴⁶

The Response of Muslimat NU

The response of Muslimat NU to the establishment of PKB touched on an entirely different set of issues. The most recent inflammation of a fairly longstanding conflict between Muslimat NU and the PBNU took place a month before the formation of PKB, when Muslimat NU held the opening ceremony for its annual national working meeting at the presidential palace and invited Adi Sasono to open the meeting. One of Muslimat NU's primary activities was to run a large cooperative, and Adi Sasono was the minister of cooperatives at the time. It was thus in the organization's practical interests to maintain good relations with both Sasono and Habibie.

However, Wahid was rankled by the public honour thus being accorded Habibie and Sasono — both senior leaders of ICMI, the modernist group that Wahid had longstanding antagonism towards.⁴⁷ The PBNU responded by boycotting the meeting, and banned Fatayat NU from attending as well.⁴⁸ The following day, the women who had participated in the Muslimat NU meeting went to Wahid's house to make amends. He lectured them for two hours on the importance of standing firm against Habibie and the

ICMI crowd, which had for so long oppressed NU. This, he told them, was why he was considering forming a political party. Muslimat NU leaders agreed to maintain solidarity with the PBNU on this point and support the party he was about to form.⁴⁹

According to at least one Muslimat NU leader, however, the meeting with Wahid did not resolve the differences between Muslimat NU and the PBNU. Although the women felt forced to acquiesce to Wahid's demands at the time, many of them did not share his antipathy towards the modernist Muslims and were unconvinced of the necessity to form a political party to oppose them. Moreover, Muslimat NU had a relationship with both the New Order and Habibie governments that was predicated less on opposition and more on maintaining access to the corridors of power.⁵⁰ One would therefore not have expected a great outpouring of enthusiasm from its members for PKB. And in fact, at the close of Muslimat NU's working meeting, the chair of the organization, Ibu Aisyah Baidlawi Wahid (Wahid's sister and a Golkar leader), released a statement reiterating that all Muslimat NU members were free to join any party they wished based on Khittah '26, which, she reminded the public, had not been revoked and was therefore still in effect.⁵¹

In the responses of Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU to the formation of PKB, we see Khittah '26 being invoked by two different groups for their own purposes — the first in order to protect its resources and energies from being siphoned off to a political party, and the other to protect its comfortable relationship with the regime.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PKU, PNU AND SUNI

Shortly after PKB was established, three more NU parties were formed: the Muslim Community Awakening Party (PKU) led by KH Yusuf Hasyim (Wahid's uncle); the Rise of the Muslim Community Party (PNU) led by Syukron Makmun; and Solidarity of the National Union of Indonesia (SUNI) led by Abu Hasan. Conflict quickly emerged between these three parties and PKB along two main lines: the issue of PKB's relationship with the PBNU, and the more ideological issue of Islamist politics.

PKB appeared to spark the former conflict by claiming to be the only party that had the 'blessing' (*restu*) of the board, while dismissing the other parties as having been formed by a 'heartsick club' (*barisan sakit hati*)

of individuals jealous at not being included in PKB.⁵² The three smaller parties responded by accusing PKB of unfairly claiming to be the 'only' NU party, a claim they said went against the ideals and principles of Khittah '26 (Bisri 1998). Although the PBNU issued numerous statements saying that the formation of PKB did not violate Khittah '26 because there was no formal relationship between the board and the party, its actions belied these statements. Yusuf Hasyim and Abu Hasan, the heads of 'rival' parties PKU and SUNI, charged the PBNU with discrimination in giving PKB, but not their own parties, the use of district and subdistrict NU offices.⁵³ Lakpesdam was reprimanded by the board for printing an acknowledgement that PKB was 'not the only child' (*bukan anak tunggal*) of the PBNU in its monthly *Bulletin Ta'awun*.⁵⁴ And when an elite NU official merely visited a PKU leader at his home one evening, he was rebuked by Wahid for his association with the party.⁵⁵ This conflict reached its peak when Wahid remarked in his typically controversial fashion that PKB was the egg laid by the chicken (NU), while the other parties were merely the faeces excreted by the chicken.⁵⁶

The other matter creating conflict among the four parties was the issue of the role of Islam in the political system. SUNI did not publicly state a strong position on this issue, but PKU and PNU both held more Islamist stances than PKB, and argued for a political system that reflected the fact of Islam's majority status in Indonesia.⁵⁷

Given the claim that four parties would make on the NU vote, PKU tried to distinguish itself from PKB by emphasizing its Islamic orientation.⁵⁸ Yusuf Hasyim said that PKU would be willing to join PKB if the latter changed its 'basis' (*asas*) to Islam — thus highlighting the fact that at a time when many parties and socio-religious organizations (such as Muhammadiyah and HMI) were adopting Islam as their basis, PKB remained a pluralist party. He also made several public statements about the need for an increased role for Islam:

We must prevent this nation from becoming a secular nation. For that reason we have a heavy responsibility to make sure that the aspirations of the Islamic people are reflected in our legal system ('Indonesia Jangan Jadi Negara Sekuler', *Republika*, 24 March 1999: 1).

While urging Islamic parties to work together to achieve a greater political role for Islam, Yusuf Hasyim emphasized that he was not calling for

an Islamic state. 'We are not aiming to create an Islamic state — do not misunderstand us', he said, speaking of PKU and of the *umat Islam* in general.⁵⁹

In an interesting series of newspaper articles, PKU deputy chair Salahuddin Wahid engaged his brother Abdurrahman Wahid in a public debate about whether KH Wahid Hasyim, their father, would have wanted Indonesia to become an Islamic state (*Media Indonesia*, 8, 9, 17 and 23 October 1998).⁶⁰ Abdurrahman argued that their father had always called for a state based on Pancasila, while Salahuddin referred to documentation showing that during the negotiations on the 1945 Constitution, Hasyim had insisted both that the president should be a Muslim and that the state should be based on Islam.⁶¹ Regardless of who was correct, the existence of three 'rogue' parties all representing NU, and especially the diversion from NU's party line of pluralism and anti-Islamism, highlights the internal diversity that has always existed within NU.

The internal NU debate on the role of Islam took place in a wider context of national politicization of Islam and a resurgence of debate on the Jakarta Charter and the secular versus religious basis of the state. Islamic organizations and parties saw this as their chance to promote a more political role for Islam and gain formal recognition of its ideological role as the basis of the Indonesian state. Although there were of course a range of views within this general position, most of the Islamic parties advocated a more influential role for Islam within the political system while stopping short of calling for an Islamic state. The most frequently heard line of argumentation was that political Islam was not seeking to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia, but rather to integrate Islamic values into the legislative system. While not clearly defined, 'Islamic values' usually seemed to mean Islamic principles such as 'doing good and avoiding evil' (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*), 'Islam as a religion of love' (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*) and 'outdoing one another in doing good' (*fastabiqul khairat*). Lev (1972: 241) argued three decades ago that it was precisely the modernists' lack of clarity about what they wanted from political Islam or a state based on Islam that had allowed their opponents to create extreme and frightening visions of an Islamic state, thereby allowing non-modernists to dominate the debate. While he wrote this in 1972, I believe it is still largely true today.

THE PATH TO THE PRESIDENCY

The next year was one of great upheaval for Indonesia. President Soeharto had resigned, President Habibie had committed the country to general elections in June 1999, and presidential elections were due four months later. Megawati Soekarnoputri was immensely popular because of her clean image and her long history of steadfast resistance to Soeharto. There was a real possibility not only that her party would sweep the elections, but that she herself would be nominated as the next president of Indonesia — thus forcing Indonesia's Muslims to consider their position on a female head of state.

In early November 1998, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) — a government-backed body representing all major Islamic groups, and authorized to issue religious edicts (*fatwa*) — held a congress at which it issued a *fatwa* stating that a woman could not become the president of Indonesia.⁶² This decision polarized the Muslim community and infuriated NU's women activists. Many observers linked the *fatwa* to the opposition of modernist Muslim parties to Megawati, regarding it as pre-emptive action to thwart her nomination. NU's own *ulama* had issued a *fatwa* in 1987 declaring that there was no prohibition on a woman becoming head of state. So when MUI issued its *fatwa* expressing the opposite view, P3M and LKPSM held public seminars in Jakarta and Yogyakarta at which religious leaders such as KH Hussein Muhammad and KH Said Aqil Siradj attacked the religious arguments on which the MUI *fatwa* was based.

On 10–13 November 1998, a special session of the MPR was held to discuss modifications to the country's electoral laws, in particular a reduction in the number of appointive seats allocated to the military. It became the focus of violent clashes between the armed forces protecting the MPR and students demonstrating against the anti-democratic nature of the MPR. Amidst the intense chaos surrounding the special session of the MPR, the four main opposition leaders — Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati Soekarnoputri, Amien Rais and Sultan Hamengkubuwono of Yogyakarta — met at Wahid's residence to thrash out a unified position. The resulting Ciganjur Declaration called for a phasing out of the political role of the military over six years, asked Indonesians to accept the results of the special session, and affirmed that Soeharto should eventually be held accountable for his excesses.⁶³ It is indicative of the deep decay of Indonesia's political institutions at this time that this meeting of the 'four

reform leaders' was given at least as much weight by the general public as the proceedings of the special session itself.

PKB and the 1999 General Elections

The first half of 1999 was coloured by a massive outpouring of energy in preparation for the June elections, which were being hailed as the first democratic elections to be held in Indonesia since 1955. PKB launched a vigorous campaign, during which the theoretical distinction between itself and NU became deeply compromised.

After months of frenzied campaigning, politicking and hype, Indonesia's general elections were held on 7 June 1999. Despite the fears of many, the campaign period, as well as the elections themselves, were relatively free of violence, and the results were generally endorsed as free and fair. The public remained patient during a long and protracted vote-counting process, and even when the results were announced did not carry out widespread protests as had been expected. PDI-P did extremely well, gaining 33.7 per cent of the vote and 153 seats in parliament. Golkar took second place with 22.4 per cent of the vote and 104 seats in parliament. PKB gained 12.6 per cent of the vote and 51 parliamentary seats.⁶⁴ This was a disappointment to most PKB politicians, who had been convinced that the party stood a good chance of taking the winning spot.⁶⁵ Among the Islamic parties, PKB gained the highest percentage of the vote, although PPP got more seats in parliament. All of the Islamic parties combined (including PKB) picked up only 38 per cent of the vote and 174 seats in parliament.

Alliance Formation: PKB, the Poros Tengah and Wahid

With the general elections out of the way, the next hurdle facing Indonesia was the election of a new president and vice president. At this stage the power to elect the president and vice president was still in the hands of the MPR, which was due to convene in October 1999. Of the 700 seats in the MPR, one-third were still appointive positions occupied by the armed forces, provincial legislatures and other special interest groups. This ensured that the military and its allies in Golkar would continue to play a decisive role in the choice of president and vice president.

In the months after the elections, two loose alliances emerged: one between the nationalist parties (PDI-P and PKB) and the other between a

number of primarily modernist Islamic parties. The Central Axis (Poros Tengah), as the latter coalition was called, was formed by Amien Rais, the leader of the National Mandate Party (PAN), in August 1999. It consisted of PAN, PPP, the Crescent Moon and Star Party (PBB) and the Justice Party (PK); PKB considered joining but eventually aligned itself with PDI-P. The third force in parliament was Golkar (though much reduced in size) and its traditional ally, the military. After an on-again, off-again courtship, in August 1999 PKB decided to formally endorse Megawati Soekarnoputri as its presidential candidate, based not only on its alliance with PDI-P, but on the fact that her party had legitimately won a majority in the June elections.⁶⁶ As was expected, Golkar nominated Habibie. But in a surprise move, Amien Rais nominated Abdurrahman Wahid as the presidential candidate of the Poros Tengah.⁶⁷

Although Wahid publicly accepted the Poros Tengah's nomination in mid August, most people in both NU and the Poros Tengah thought it was some kind of ruse, and mutual suspicion prevailed. The prevalent theory on the Poros Tengah side was that Wahid would pretend to run until the very end, thus preventing the Islamic parties from fielding another candidate, and at the last minute step down, handing his votes to Megawati. Meanwhile, most of the NU leaders I spoke to believed that the Poros Tengah was using Wahid to deflect votes away from Megawati, and planned to dump him at the last minute.⁶⁸ Amidst all the suspicion and rumour mongering, the fact remained that PKB and its chair, Matori Abdul Djalil, faced the highly ironic situation of fielding a candidate in competition with PKB's own founder and the chair of NU.

On 24 August 1999, Wahid announced that NU members were 'commanded' (*wajib*) to support the Poros Tengah and, by implication, his nomination for the presidency.⁶⁹ As it became increasingly apparent that Wahid was indeed serious about running for the presidency, PKB's politicians split on the issue. Some supported Matori's determination to remain true to the decision to nominate Megawati while others felt that it would be unthinkable for NU's own party not to support the chair of NU. One of the earliest demonstrations of this split came only days after Matori announced PKB's support for Megawati, in the form of an accusation by the secretary of the Yogyakarta branch of PKB, Nur Ahmad Afandi, that Matori had misrepresented the results and PKB had *not* in fact voted to support Megawati's nomination.⁷⁰ The following day, however, Muhaimin Iskandar, the secretary general of PKB, denied that the Yogyakarta branch

had made an official complaint along these lines. Meanwhile, *Republika* quoted KH Nuruddin Rachman, a PKB founder, as saying that Matori's announcement of support for Megawati was 'straying too far' (*kebablasan*) from Wahid's wishes, because 'while organizationally he does not hold a position in PKB, nevertheless all decisions rest in the hand of Gus Dur'.⁷¹ On 3 September, PKB deputy chair Alwi Shihab told the press that PKB's nomination of Megawati was still only 'semi-final'.⁷² A month later, he reiterated in stronger terms that if the Poros Tengah was indeed serious in nominating Wahid, then PKB would go 'all out' in supporting him — perhaps inadvertently revealing the niggling doubts remaining in the minds of PKB leaders about the Islamic coalition's true intentions.⁷³

The lines of fragmentation within PKB were not clean, but somewhat counterintuitively it seems to have been the senior *kiai* on the party's Advisory Council who wanted to stick with the party's original decision, while many of the younger politicians wanted to switch to Wahid.⁷⁴ Based on long acquaintance with his record of erratic behaviour and controversial statements, many of the *kiai* may have held deep reservations about Wahid's ability to perform well as president. In addition, many of them did not approve of Wahid's efforts at theological renewal within NU. Many of the younger generation of PKB politicians, on the other hand, were either related to Wahid (like Muhaimin Iskandar, for example) or owed their careers and positions to him. It also has to be admitted that they lacked political experience, reflecting the suddenness with which PKB had been formed.

The PBNU, too, had strong reservations about the prospect of Wahid running for the presidency, although, as usual, its stance was less than consistent. On 26 August 1999, Achmad Bagdja (the secretary general of the Tanfidziyah) declared that the issue of Matori's 'unethical' support for Megawati would be discussed at a PBNU meeting in Semarang; however, no announcement was issued after this meeting.⁷⁵ In a clear breach of Khittah '26, on 1 September 1999 the PBNU announced that it had 'summoned' Matori to discuss his support for Megawati, and declared that it 'sympathized with the wishes of NU members who want Gus Dur to be a presidential candidate'.⁷⁶ However, given the caution of the *kiai* in both PKB and the Syuriah, it refrained from giving him outright support. On 20 October 1999, the PBNU issued an oblique statement saying that it 'appreciated the willingness of Gus Dur to become a presidential candidate', and that 'while in general NU members and *ulama* would

prefer that Gus Dur remain the “nation’s *kiai*”, the board understood Gus Dur’s right ‘to become a presidential candidate’ and would not stand in his way.⁷⁷

The Syuriah held four meetings to discuss the issue of Wahid’s candidacy. At the first meeting, held in Langitan, East Java, in September 1999, the *kiai* expressed concern about the Poros Tengah’s intentions and counselled the need for ‘caution’ (*waspada*); mainly for this reason, they decided not to support the latter’s candidacy of Wahid.⁷⁸ The second meeting in Cirebon had a similar outcome. At the third meeting in Jakarta, Poros Tengah representatives Amien Rais and Fuad Bawazier finally managed to persuade the *kiai* that they were serious in nominating Wahid. Nevertheless, at the last meeting, held on 19 October 1999, the day before the presidential elections, the *kiai* were still not ready to throw their full support behind Wahid. Instead they released an official statement that was characteristically ambivalent: they neither forbade nor endorsed Wahid’s candidacy, saying only that they would ‘pray’ for him. (The more positive spin that this decision received in the press was, according to one PKB member, a ‘creation’ of Wahid himself.)⁷⁹ The *kiai* also drew up contingency plans: if Wahid did not become president (either because the Poros Tengah withdrew the nomination or because Wahid himself withdrew at the last minute and Megawati was elected), they would form a team to lobby Megawati for NU positions in cabinet; if he did become president, they would form a thinktank to ‘advise’ Wahid.⁸⁰

As the presidential election drew closer, many other groups within NU were also meeting to exchange information and develop contingency plans. Whether it was a group of students, of PBNU officials or of *ulama*, the question was always the same: ‘What do you think Gus Dur is going to do?’ Right to the end, even those closest to Wahid seemed uncertain about his true intentions.

This was clear at a meeting of the Institute of National Studies (LKB) that I attended on 17 October 1999.⁸¹ This gathering of senior NU members and supporters was held at a time when the level of anxiety and confusion surrounding the upcoming election was reaching a crescendo. Present were about 20 people, mostly men in their 50s or 60s, almost all of whom seemed to have graduated from a foreign university. PMII, Banser and Lakpesdam were represented, as were the military and the business community. No one from PKB was present, and only Rozy Munir from the PBNU. After sharing the latest information on Wahid’s intentions, those present agreed that he

appeared to be serious about his candidacy, and very confident about his chances of becoming president. They discussed various scenarios involving the vice presidency, what Amien Rais was 'really' up to and whether the students would accept Wahid as president. The general consensus was that it would be best if Wahid did not run for the presidency but remained above politics as the 'Father of the Nation' (*Bapak Bangsa*). This conclusion was based partly on their own apprehensions about Wahid's 'capacity' (*kemampuan*) to succeed as president, but even more on the potential shame to NU if he ran but did not win, an outcome that they felt was quite likely. In fact, the group's confidence in Wahid's success was so low that they spent most of the evening discussing the possibility of a presidium that would take over if the MPR vote was deadlocked, and whether or not the student groups would accept such an outcome.

This meeting was illustrative of the climate of uncertainty and speculation pervading NU at the time. Even those ostensibly in the inner circle of NU did not have access to reliable information about what was going on in PKB. Despite being composed of senior NU figures and those close to them, this particular group had great difficulty accessing the senior PKB leadership to find out what was happening — their entry point was PMII chair Syaiful, and even he had to go through the younger *kiai* in order to contact PKB leaders.

The Election of Wahid to the Presidency

As late as 19 October 1999, PKB itself had still not resolved its official position on Wahid's candidacy or decided how it would vote in the MPR session the next day. At a meeting of the PKB parliamentary faction that I attended on that day, the politicians said they were unable to make a final decision until they had heard from the Syuriah, which was scheduled to meet in the afternoon. Earlier that morning Wahid had apparently ordered the PKB faction to vote for him. At the meeting of the PKB Advisory Council that followed this demand, members maintained that they wanted to stick with their earlier decision to support Megawati, but in the end they agreed to at least bring Wahid back in and consult with him again.⁸² At 4:30 p.m. the results of the Syuriah meeting were announced in the PKB chambers: the *kiai* had voted neither to endorse Wahid's bid for the presidency nor to oppose it, but — in what constituted a weak form of endorsement — to 'pray' for him.

In the evening Wahid again met with the PKB faction, reportedly furious that the politicians were disobeying his orders of that morning.⁸³ The politicians then held a final meeting at which they voted to endorse Wahid. As PKB parliamentarian Ali Maskyur explained, PKB was 'not separate from the PBNU', and once the *kiai* had spoken, there was no way that the party could go against them, especially as they were all in Jakarta at the time.⁸⁴ According to PKB parliamentary faction secretary Abdul Khaliq, however, while the PKB meeting did indeed vote to officially endorse Wahid, this was done merely for public consumption and to appease Wahid's grassroots supporters; privately they had decided to vote for Megawati.⁸⁵

The machinations and manoeuvring among the other parties were equally devious. Habibie withdrew from the race at 5 a.m. on 20 October 1999. Golkar then nominated party chair Akbar Tanjung, who (as part of an alleged deal with Wahid) also withdrew at the last minute, thus successfully preventing any other Golkar candidates from standing. Still suspicious that Wahid would step down and throw his support behind Megawati, PBB nominated party head Yusril Izha Mahendra as its candidate. His withdrawal just before the 7 a.m. deadline for nominations left only two candidates in the race: Megawati and Wahid.⁸⁶ According to Abdul Khaliq, this is when PKB members became 'confused'. They had discussed only a two-stage voting scenario designed to get Megawati elected; they now stuck with their original instructions to vote for Wahid even though the official procedure had changed to a single-stage process. On the other hand, I spoke to PMII activists at the MPR building early that morning who already knew that Yusril was going to stand *and* withdraw, so it is fairly certain that the PKB parliamentary faction also had this information before going into the voting session.

On the afternoon of 20 October 1999, Wahid was elected president by a fairly narrow margin, receiving 373 votes to Megawati's 313, with five abstentions. While the Islamic factions erupted in shouts of 'God is great' (*Allahu akbar*), the prevailing sentiment within NU and PKB was surprise — and deep ambivalence. While on one level they were delighted that their leader had succeeded in becoming president, and were pleased about the benefits that would inevitably flow to NU, on another level they were deeply anxious about Wahid's ability to perform as president, expressing such sentiments as: 'If Gus Dur fails, NU will be destroyed and will not be able to rise again for a very long time'.⁸⁷

This anxiety on the part of many people I spoke to at this time seemed to derive from a view that Wahid had 'changed' over the previous year, becoming more erratic than ever, fabricating the content of meetings and historical events, becoming wildly angry at visitors (including foreign diplomats) and so on. The elite *kiai* were especially aware of this; this was the main source of their hesitation over supporting his candidacy. Nevertheless Wahid's personal power within NU remained undiminished, as evidenced by his ability to persuade the *kiai* to give him their (half-hearted) blessing to run for the presidency after he had made it clear that he would do so with or without it. He also retained a position of influence over PKB, as illustrated by his ability to have a say in its internal decision making despite having issued public statements distancing himself from the party.⁸⁸ So in spite of the fact that almost everybody I spoke to (members of the PBNU, *kiai*, NGO activists, students) felt that Wahid would make a better Father of the Nation (*Bapak Bangsa*) than president, when it came to the crunch they did not dare oppose him, or even publicly express their concerns. This may explain why the prevailing reaction of NU members to his election as president was deep ambivalence.

With demonstrations taking place around the country at Megawati's failure to win the presidency, it must have come as a considerable relief to the ruling elite when she agreed to contest the vice presidency. She was nominated for the position by PKB rather than her own PDI-P. With the support of Golkar and the military, she won an overwhelming majority in the MPR on 21 October 1999.

THE PRESIDENCY OF ABDURRAHMAN WAHID

The presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid was in some ways certain from the outset to be a disappointment, largely because hopes and expectations had been raised to an impossibly high level. Muslim groups hailed the ascension of an *ulama* to the highest seat of power, expecting that he would succeed where Habibie had failed in championing the cause of Islam. Reformers celebrated the rise of one of their own — of a noted activist and a critic of the excesses of the Soeharto regime. However, Wahid's presidency was quickly beset by political blunders, poor management and an apparent reversal of many of the principles and values he had proclaimed for the previous 15 years. Leaving analysis of the latter development to the next chapter, I will briefly review here the highlights, both positive and negative,

of Wahid's presidency. I do not intend to provide an exhaustive examination of Wahid's presidency; that has been done by others.⁸⁹ The purpose here is merely to describe the main political events of his presidency, to provide a context for the more substantive discussion that follows.

Wahid began his presidency on a positive note: his first major speech, on 23 October 1999 in Bali, made a strong call for the need for religious pluralism and tolerance, and for the condemnation of violence in the name of religion.⁹⁰ This seemed to offer a reassuring signal that Wahid was still committed to the values he had long espoused. He went on to achieve some impressive successes. In February 2000, Wahid fired security minister and armed forces chief of staff Wiranto in a bold move that effectively sidelined one of the most powerful figures in the military. In April 2000 he eliminated the infamous internal security agency Bakorstanas. He also removed restrictions on the use of the Chinese language and the celebration of Chinese public holidays. He lent his weight to an effort to set up a separate human rights court to try past and future human rights abuses.⁹¹ In short, he made an important contribution to several causes that he had actively supported during his days as an NU activist.

Nevertheless, a series of political miscalculations and general mismanagement soon led to a flood of criticism that would eventually pull him from office. Early in his tenure he publicly supported renewing trade relations with Israel and revoking the ban on communism. While consistent with his liberal ideals, both proposals were politically disastrous and sparked outrage in Muslim circles. Wahid's own uncle, Yusuf Hasyim, publicly decried any lifting of the ban on communism, citing the history of NU's involvement in 'wiping out' communism in 1965.⁹²

In April 2000 Wahid fired two economics ministers, Yusuf Kalla of Golkar and Laksamana Sukardi of PDI-P. Apart from making vague and unsubstantiated allegations of corruption, he did not provide a solid explanation for this move. This infuriated both of the parties concerned, especially when Wahid replaced Laksamana Sukardi with PBNU deputy chair Rozy Munir as minister of investment and state-owned enterprises.⁹³ Indonesia's state-owned enterprises were known to be a lucrative target of corrupt government officials because of the huge scale of their financial dealings; Indonesia's 144 state-owned banks had reported profits of over \$18 billion in 1998 alone, for example.⁹⁴ There was therefore a great deal of immediate public speculation that Munir had been appointed to the position in order to be able to siphon off funds for PKB.⁹⁵

Another source of concern was Wahid's appointment of his brother, Hasyim Wahid, to the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Association (IBRA, also called BPPN), another 'liquid' body controlling over \$600 billion in bank assets. He was appointed assistant to then deputy chair Cacuk Sudarijanto, who soon after rose to the top position when the president ousted Glenn Yusuf. Sudarijanto almost immediately named an organization owned by Choirul Anam (head of the East Java branch of PKB) to manage IBRA assets.⁹⁶ Hasyim Wahid himself acknowledged that he was basically a debt collector for the agency: 'My job is to force people to pay their debts to BPPN',⁹⁷ he said, adding that he was basically a 'thug' (*korak*).⁹⁸ The public outcry over this seemingly blatant example of nepotism was so great that the BPPN ombudsman formally requested Abdurrahman Wahid to 'clarify' the appointment.⁹⁹

Although Wahid was criticized early on in his presidency for his erratic style, the unreliability of his public statements and his penchant for joking about serious state matters, it was not until mid 2000 that his detractors were able to find a concrete legal violation to pin on him. Ironically, the main actors in this process were the same parties that had been instrumental in propelling him to the presidency — Golkar led by Akbar Tanjung and the Poros Tengah led by Amien Rais. In August 2000, the DPR began a formal investigation into two cases of alleged corruption: 'Bruneigate', involving a \$2 million gift from the Sultan of Brunei to the Indonesian president; and 'Buloggate', involving a \$350,000 gift from Sapuan, the deputy head of the National Logistics Agency (Bulog), to Soewondo, Wahid's personal masseur.¹⁰⁰ Although the police cleared Wahid of involvement in Buloggate in October 2000, the parliamentary investigation continued, and at the end of January the DPR found that Wahid 'may have been' implicated in both scandals.

On 2 February 2001, parliament began the process that would ultimately lead to the president's impeachment by issuing the first of two censure motions, giving the president three months to respond.¹⁰¹ Wahid replied at the end of March, insisting on his innocence. The DPR then issued a second censure motion in May 2001, this time giving the president one month to reply. Wahid's immediate response was to make a short speech on national television during which he made general references to the importance of maintaining national stability but did not address the accusations of parliament.¹⁰² During the course of the month, he threatened to declare a state of emergency if the DPR proceeded with the dismissal process,¹⁰³

but undeterred, parliament set 1 August as the date for a special dismissal hearing. Over the next month and a half, Wahid reshuffled his cabinet three times, threatened to declare a state of emergency three times and issued two ultimatums in which he threatened to disband the parliament. His actions grew more and more extreme. In July he attempted to replace the chief of police, Bimantoro — whose support was necessary if Wahid was to declare a state of emergency — without first going through the legal channel of obtaining parliamentary approval. However, supported by a majority of the police and the military, Bimantoro refused to step down.¹⁰⁴

When the second of Wahid's deadlines for a compromise solution passed at 6 p.m. on 20 July 2001, the DPR leadership held an emergency meeting and announced that the scheduled impeachment hearing would be moved forward from 1 August 2001 to 23 July 2001. On the morning of 22 July, party leaders met with Vice President Megawati, who was expected to succeed Wahid as president, and Amien Rais issued a statement saying that Wahid would probably be deposed the following day. While receiving a flurry of visitors, from activist supporters to military and senior advisors, Wahid continued to maintain that he would not step down. That evening tanks were positioned in front of the presidential palace as part of a military 'parade'. MPR members gathered in anticipation of a promised announcement by Wahid at 10 p.m. At 11 p.m., Wahid met with defence minister Lumintang, military chief of staff Widodo and other top officials, still insisting that he would declare a state of emergency. At 1 a.m. on 23 July 2001, he issued a presidential decree disbanding the MPR and calling for general elections within one year. But without the support of the military, whose top officials were gathered at Megawati's house in Jakarta, Wahid's manoeuvres were useless. At 2:30 a.m., the Jakarta chief of police, Sofjan Yacoeb, ordered police to disregard the presidential decree and provide security for the special session of parliament scheduled for that day. At 8 a.m. on 23 July 2001, the MPR began its special session; shortly afterwards, the Supreme Court declared Wahid's decree unconstitutional. By 5 p.m., the MPR had revoked Wahid's presidency and installed Megawati Soekarnoputri as the fifth President of Indonesia.¹⁰⁵

The next two days were tense ones as Indonesians waited to see how Wahid would respond. Initially he remained defiant, saying that he would not leave the presidential palace even if the electricity and water were turned off. PKB was similarly defiant; with the exception of Matori and two others, it refused to recognize the legitimacy of the special session

of the MPR or of the new president. The political victors of the moment, Megawati and Amien Rais, did their best to defuse the situation by saying that Wahid should take his time in leaving the palace, that there was no rush. As the reality sank in, and through the gentle influence of his wife and other supporters, Wahid gradually accepted the finality of what had taken place. On the afternoon of 25 July he left the palace, accompanied by his family and closest NGO supporters, and cheered along the way by throngs of NU supporters (Murdoch 2001; Barton 2002).

The role of NGOs, both secular and NU-affiliated, in the last days of Wahid's presidency deserves quick mention. On 22 July, prominent NGO leaders and intellectuals such as Emmy Hafidz (WALHI), Yenny Rosa Damayanti (Solidaritas Perempuan), Hermawan Sulistiyo (LIPI), Maskyur Maskub (Lakpesdam), Arbi Sanit (University of Indonesia) and Muchtar Pakpahan (a labour activist) began to gather at the palace to advise and support Wahid. The next day, representatives of over 80 NGOs held an emergency meeting to try to forge a unified stance towards the political crisis. Press reports at the time said that the NGOs had urged Wahid to issue the decree dissolving the MPR,¹⁰⁶ and had continued to reject his removal from office even after Megawati was installed as president. However, Maskyur Maskub justified their actions by saying that the NGOs were simply acknowledging that Wahid was vital to the *reformasi* process, knowing that under Megawati they would have to work from outside the palace rather than from the privileged position they had enjoyed during Wahid's presidency.¹⁰⁷ Although it was too late in the day for the consensus among NGO leaders to have any influence on the final outcome, it did appear that the NGO world was strangely out of touch with political reality. As Lakpesdam director Lilis Husna observed, the NGO leaders were complicit in Wahid's fall by encouraging him to issue a decree he had no power to implement, thereby signing his own political death warrant.¹⁰⁸

The NGO leaders gave the defeated Wahid a hero's welcome, hailing him as the Father of the Nation and urging him to take the helm of the *reformasi* movement from outside the formal political sphere. The general public, too, breathed a sigh of relief now that the crisis was finally over. Their ire quickly turned to a desire to help Wahid re-enter civilian life with as much dignity as possible. But in welcoming Wahid back as a reform leader, the NGO community appeared to turn a blind eye to the many violations of reform ideals he had been responsible for during his 21 months in office. Interestingly, NU-affiliated NGOs were more realistic about this than their

secular counterparts. According to Hanif Dhakiri, then senior director of the Institute for Social Institutions Studies (ISIS), they participated in the general acclaim at Wahid's return to the *reformasi* movement in order to give NU supporters a way of saving face. By overlooking their leader's ignominious downfall, he said, they hoped to avoid bloodshed.¹⁰⁹

In hindsight it became clear that in the eyes of ordinary Indonesians, Wahid's main sin had not been the misappropriation of public funds — he had, after all, been cleared by police of involvement in the Buloggate scandal — but rather his complete indifference to public opinion. What was understandable eccentricity when Wahid was the head of NU became unforgivable when he was president. The degree of public confusion was such that in April 2000 the *Jakarta Post* was able to sponsor a seminar called 'Understanding Gus Dur' at which high-level government officials, academics, military officers and foreign diplomats spent an entire day trying to figure Wahid out. These distinguished figures concluded that the president was unpredictable to a potentially destructive degree, and that control mechanisms would need to be established if the government was to work effectively.¹¹⁰

Wahid made another fatal political mistake in mishandling his relationship with Megawati, his popular vice president. Although Wahid had wrested the presidency from her, Megawati was in the beginning a faithful supporter of the president. This fidelity faded, however, when Wahid broke his promise of August 2000 to hand over the day-to-day running of the government to her. In February 2001, she gave the nod for her party, PDI-P, to back the censure motion against Wahid — thus beginning the process that would ultimately topple him from the presidency.

Equally inept was Wahid's handling of parliament. Early in his presidency he compared the legislators to kindergarteners, and he continued to make frequent public jabs at them. When the DPR censured Wahid for his involvement in the Buloggate and Bruneigate scandals, he waited until the last possible moment before responding and again made public comments about the irrelevance of the censure motions. The ultimate insult came as his presidency was on its last legs, when Wahid made his infamous threat to dissolve the parliament. In many ways it seemed as though Wahid was operating according to *pesantren* norms, in which he as the senior *kiai* had absolute authority and unshakeable legitimacy. He appeared to ignore the precarious political reality that his own party,

PKB, had garnered only 12.6 per cent of the popular vote, and declined to carry out the kind of political compromises and alliance building that are necessary in modern party politics.

Although public sentiment turned in favour of Wahid once he was removed from office, PKB suffered more long-term consequences. Despite all the machinations surrounding Wahid's rise to the presidency, in the beginning the chair of PKB's parliamentary faction, Matori Abdul Djalil, remained loyal to Wahid. When I interviewed him just before the presidential vote, Matori seemed convinced that Wahid knew what he was doing — that his actions were part of a cunning strategy to have Megawati elected. When I next interviewed him, just after the vice presidential vote, he told me that Wahid had been right all along, that the combination of Wahid as president and Megawati as vice president was the best possible configuration of power. The alternative (Megawati as president with Akbar Tanjung as vice president), he said, would have resulted in greater nationalist–Islamist polarization, and Megawati would have been a weak president who would be vulnerable to manipulation by Golkar.¹¹¹

By mid 2001, however, Wahid had clearly lost Matori's support. On 20 July, against the wishes of the PKB parliamentary faction, Matori attended a meeting of MPR leaders to discuss Wahid's impending removal from office. PKB's Advisory Council (headed by Wahid) immediately suspended him as chair of the party.¹¹² On 5 August, Matori and Abdul Khaliq (secretary of the PKB parliamentary faction and a Matori loyalist) were formally fired by the party, although reportedly not before being asked to help procure ministerial positions for PKB in the new Megawati administration.¹¹³ When Matori contested this decision, the party split in two, with Matori leading one faction and Alwi Shihab the other.

The internal chaos within PKB in the days following Wahid's loss of the presidency reflected the widespread confusion and uncertainty among the politicians as to whether to remain loyal to Wahid and go down with him, or cut their losses and run. Eventually, with typical NU pragmatism, the latter option prevailed. Some PKB members argued that the party had effectively been disbanded by Wahid's decree disbanding parliament, making the PKB faction within the MPR defunct. Others wanted the party to remain active in parliament so that they could make their voices heard.¹¹⁴

Questions of whether to continue to participate in the MPR, of whether to accept ministerial positions (should they be offered) and of the leadership of PKB continued to plague the party for several months following Wahid's fall. Ultimately Megawati did not offer Alwi Shihab's PKB faction any cabinet positions, although she did give the historically significant position of minister of religion to Said Aqil Munawar of NU and made Matori her minister of defence. Over the next two years the split between the two PKB factions became increasingly acrimonious. Two PKB congresses were held and attempts by the PBNU as well as Megawati's administration to facilitate a reconciliation failed. After a long-running court battle, the right to the PKB name was eventually resolved in Alwi Shihab's favour shortly before the 2004 elections.

CONCLUSION

Many of the political manoeuvres and activities of Abdurrahman Wahid and NU from the end of the New Order period through to the end of Wahid's presidency can be understood in the light of the tension between modernist Muslims and traditionalist Muslims. Consider, for example, Wahid's reluctance in January 1998 to join Amien Rais in a unified *reformasi* movement and his relatively conciliatory attitude towards Soeharto compared to other reform leaders of the time; or the inability of the two major coalitions of opposition groups, the NU-dominated FKI and the Rais-backed MAR, to join forces against Soeharto. Or consider Wahid's stated rationale for forming PKB — to keep political Islam at bay — and the part Rais and the modernist parties played in his downfall. All of these fit within a framework of conflict between traditionalists and modernists that dates back to the early 1900s.

It is not as simple as that, of course. The political Islam dynamic that NU likes to present as a feature of modernist Islam is, as we have seen, prevalent in NU itself, in the more Islamist-oriented stances of PKU, PNU and SUNI. Above all, it is impossible to overlook the contradiction of Wahid's rise to the presidency on the wings of a primarily modernist Muslim coalition, which flies in the face of a modernist-traditionalist paradigm. Perhaps history will reveal a more complex explanation for this apparent aberration, but for the moment I would argue that the essential element in this story is Abdurrahman Wahid's personal ambitions, both for himself and for NU — that he was willing to do whatever it took to

achieve his goals. These personal ambitions both drew from and fed into the modernist-traditionalist rivalry that informed Wahid's actions (and those of other NU actors) during this period.

At any rate, these were certainly years of tremendous highs and lows for NU. And NU, as always, was far from unified in its response to the political developments that were taking place during these years. As we have seen, the Khittah '26 rhetoric was brought out and dusted off by various groups opposed to the formation of PKB. In the next chapter, I will examine more closely some of the responses of various elements of NU to the political developments just discussed.

Notes

1. Although it literally means 'reform', *reformasi* has come to connote much more than this; it refers to a movement, an era, an ideological position and an aspiration for democracy.
2. Many analysts and scholars have debated the causes of the spectacular collapse of Soeharto and his New Order regime — was it structural or voluntary, externally or internally driven, a gradual transition or a cataclysmic revolution? For a review of these events and an analysis of causal factors from a variety of perspectives, see Budiman, Hatley and Kingsbury (1998), Vatikiotis (1998) and Emmerson (1999).
3. See "'Dialog Nasional" dan Persoalannya', *Kompas*, 7 January 1998: 6; 'Gus Dur Skeptis dengan Gagasan Dialog Nasional', *Kompas*, 19 January 1998: 14.
4. I attended both events, so my descriptions are based on personal observation.
5. From the written statement distributed at the event.
6. From the written statement distributed at the event.
7. 'PBNU: ABRI Sebaiknya Dukung Reformasi', *Kompas*, 16 April 1998: 1.
8. 'Setelah Gus Dur Melihat "Pihak Ketiga"', *Ummat*, 20 April 1998: 31.
9. I heard a diversity of opinions expressed during the course of the meeting, but the quotes and conclusions presented above represent the general consensus as expressed by the leadership at the end of the meeting.
10. 'Perwira Angkatan '45 dan PBNU Sambut Presiden untuk "Lengser Keprabon"', *Kompas*, 16 May 1998: 1.
11. Fajrul Falaakh, personal interview, 14 May 1998. Falaakh was a founding member of FKI and a member of the PBNU.
12. For the public announcement of MAR and a list of members, see 'Para Tokoh Bentuk Majelis Amanat Rakyat', *Kompas*, 15 May 1998: 1. Three names on the MAR list also appear on the FKI membership roster: Arbi Sanit, A. Syafii

- Maarif and NU member KH Mustofa Bisri. Bisri's nephew, the prominent young NU activist Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, is also on the list.
13. Abdurrahman Wahid, personal interview, 13 May 1998.
 14. 'Terbentuk, Forum Kerja Indonesia', *Kompas*, 16 May 1998: 1.
 15. Abdurrahman Wahid, personal interview, 13 May 1998. Wahid told me that upon Soeharto's return from Cairo, KH Ilyas Ruchiyat would present the letter to him. However, I have been unable to find public documentation that this was done.
 16. 'Pak Harto: Saya ini Kapok Jadi Presiden', *Kompas*, 20 May 1998: 1.
 17. 'Perihal Pernyataan Presiden Soeharto Ada yang Berharap, Ada Pula yang Kecewa', *Kompas*, 20 May 1998: 1.
 18. 'Pak Harto: Saya ini Kapok Jadi Presiden', *Kompas*, 20 May 1998: 7; 'NU Dukung Konstitusionalitas BJ Habibie', *Kompas*, 25 May 1998: 1.
 19. While I was not in the parliamentary grounds at the time, I watched the extensive television coverage of these events and later spoke to numerous NU activists who had been present.
 20. 'Tidak Etis, Mengatasnamakan Agama dalam Berpolitik', *Kompas*, 24 May 1998: 1.
 21. Of course it is also an indication of the overlap and blurred divisions between modernists and traditionalists. While I did not speak to the Ansor members in the pro-Habibie crowd, I speculate that what they shared with their modernist fellow demonstrators was a desire for a more overt Islamic presence in the political system of Indonesia — certainly that is what was suggested by the banner under which they were marching.
 22. Based on conversations with Lakpesdam leaders, 24 May 1998.
 23. PMII activist, personal interview, 23 May 1998.
 24. For an excellent description of the Islam-based parties and an analysis of their platforms and agendas, see Arskal Salim (1999).
 25. 'NU Siap Menjadi Parpol', *Sinar Pagi*, 28 May 1998: 2.
 26. 'Jangan Membuat Partai Fatamorgana', *Kompas*, 30 May 1998: 4.
 27. 'NU Jatim Desak Bentuk Partai Baru', *Sinar Pagi*, 1 June 1998: 1.
 28. 'NU Tetap Berpegang pada Khittah', *Kompas*, 1 June 1998: 7.
 29. Siradj relayed this to those present at a closed meeting of NU NGO leaders on 2 June 1998, which I attended.
 30. 'NU Jatim Bentuk Partai Nahdlatul Ummat', *Sinar Pagi*, 5 June 1998: 13.
 31. 'Partai Warga NU Perlu Pertimbangan Matang', *Kompas*, 8 June 1998: 6.
 32. The 11 members of the team were Matori Abdul Djalil (its head), Kacung Marijan, Ali Chaedar, KH Hazib Wahab, H Asnawi Latif, Sachroni, Abdul Cholik, Yahya Cholil, Ircam AR, Amrul Muktazim and Choirul Anam ('Partai Warga NU Perlu Pertimbangan Matang', *Kompas*, 8 June 1998: 6).

33. The five members of the team were KH Maruf Amin, Said Aqil Siradz, Rozy Munir, Mustofa Zuhad Mughni and Achmad Bagdja (not coincidentally, all senior members of the PBNU), assisted by a second team of nine members: Arifin Junaidi, Fahri Toha Maruf, Muhidin Gusman, Nasikin Hasan, Abdul Aziz, Lukman Saefuddin, Andi Muarli, Amien Said Husni and Muhaimin Iskandar ('PBNU Bentuk Tim Khusus Pembentukan Partai', *Kompas*, 23 June 1998: 1).
34. Matori Abdul Djalil, personal interview, 4 June 2002.
35. 'Berdirinya Partai Nasionalis Gus Dur Mendukung', *Kompas*, 28 June 1998: 1; 'Gus Dur & Megawati Bentuk Partai', *Sinar Pagi*, 28 June 1998: 1.
36. This description is based on personal observation; I attended this meeting.
37. Less than a year later, Hikam was to completely reverse his position. On 28 May 1999, he told an East Java branch seminar in Surabaya that 'NU is PKB. ... The only party for NU is PKB'. He was later to become the minister for research and technology in Wahid's 2000–01 cabinet.
38. 'Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa Telah Bangkit', *Kompas*, 24 July 1998: 11.
39. KH Yusuf Hasyim, for example, told a reporter that he would not join PKB because it was led by Matori, who 'did not fulfil the criteria to lead an NU party' because he lacked 'religious authority, political depth and political experience' ('Rois Aam PBNU: PKB tak Bertantangan dengan Khittah', *Republika*, 27 July 1999: 4). It should be noted that PKB leaders privately countered this accusation by saying that Hasyim was 'heartsick' (*sakit hati*) because he had not been asked to lead the party himself.
40. If that was indeed Wahid's motivation, it turned out to be a mistake in judgment on his part; Matori proved to be far from the puppet Wahid might have hoped for.
41. Matori Abdul Djalil, personal interview, 4 June 2002.
42. In general, the lines of division were between the Jakarta-based elite leadership (Matori Abdul Djalil, KH Mahruf Amin, KH Yusuf Muhammad and so on), who were in favour of PKB being an 'open' party, and some of the East Java branch party leaders, who wanted it to have an explicitly Islamic basis and take a more Islamist tone. For media reports of this debate, see 'Diperdebatkan Ciri Partai di PKB', *Republika*, 16 February 2000: 2; and 'Tarik-menarik Soal Partai Terbuka', *Kompas*, 16 February 2000: 6.
43. Fadhiilatul 'Ilmiah, PP Fatayat NU member, personal interview, 28 July 1998.
44. Fadhiilatul 'Ilmiah, personal interview, 28 July 1998. The gendered implications of this statement, and the purposefully apolitical stance Fatayat NU adopted during this time, are important but too extensive to elaborate on here. I have

- written elsewhere about the construction of women's roles and women's involvement in politics within NU (see Bush 1999).
45. Maria Ulfah (then head of the economy and foreign relations division of Fatayat NU, and now chair of the organization) said, 'Before Khittah '26, women's activities had to support the party; now we can focus on our own activities'. Her language reveals a view of the party as something they were not part of, but were forced to support (Maria Ulfah, personal interview, 4 March 1998).
 46. Yayuk, personal interview, 28 May 1999.
 47. Wahid was not the only one to perceive Habibie's presidency as a threat to NU. In a speech to a crowd of East Java branch leaders and activists in Surabaya on 28 May 1999, Wahid loyalist A.S. Hikam said that even if Habibie won the upcoming elections, he would not be accepted by 'society' (*masyarakat*) — upon which shouts of 'War!' (*Perang!*) rose up from the audience.
 48. Fadhiilatul 'Ilmiah, personal interview, 28 July 1998.
 49. Lilis N. Husna, Lakpesdam director and deputy chair of Muslimat NU, personal interview, 23 July 1998.
 50. Lilis N. Husna, personal interview, 23 July 1998.
 51. 'Warga Muslimat NU Bebas Salurkan Aspirasi ke Partai Mana Pun', *Republika*, 24 April 1999: 4.
 52. This was the standard explanation and party line that I heard from party functionaries at all levels.
 53. 'Silaturahmi Ulama NU di Tiga Partai Sesalkan Sikap Diskriminatif PBNU', *Kompas*, 28 April 1999: 6; 'PPP, PKU, dan PNU Minta Agar PBNU Bersikap Netral', *Republika*, 28 April 1999: 4.
 54. Ala'i Najib, editor of *Bulletin Ta'awun*, personal interview, 11 December 1998.
 55. I was told this by the official's wife, who declined to be named (personal interview, 11 December 1998).
 56. 'Telor Ayam ala Gus Dur Ditayang Ulang di TPI', *Republika*, 29 May 1999: 1.
 57. In the lead-up to the 1999 elections, Arskal Salim (1999: 66–75) asked Islamic party executives a series of questions designed to assess the level of Islamist views within their parties. Of the four NU parties, only PKB did not require the president to be a Muslim, only PKB and PKU would permit a female president, and only PKB and PNU disagreed with the formalization of sharia law in Indonesia.
 58. The heightened Islamic tone of PKU is evident when one compares its platform to that of PKB. While PKB hardly mentions religion, PKU expresses almost all of its policies in Islamic terms, complete with translations into Arabic. And

while both parties call for a democratic system, adherence to the rule of law and so on, PKU takes a distinctly Islamic approach to the values it espouses. Universal human rights for example, are described in terms of Islam's Five Essential Principles: *hifdz al-nafs* (the right to life), *hifdz al-din* (the right to freedom of religion), *hifdz al-'aql* (the right to freedom of expression), *hifdz al-nasl* (reproductive rights) and *hifdz al-mal* (the right to protection of material goods) (Wahid 1998).

59. 'Indonesia Jangan Jadi Negara Sekuler', *Republika*, 24 March 1999: 1.
60. KH Wahid Hasyim was the son of NU founder KH Hasyim Asy'ari and an important NU figure in his own right. He held influential posts in Masyumi, including the position of minister of religion (1949–52). He also played a central role in representing NU, and the *umat Islam*, in the negotiations over the Jakarta Charter and the 1945 Constitution (see Chapter 2).
61. Based on his research on the Jakarta Charter debates, Anshari (1976: 20–8) documents that during the meetings in July 1945, it was KH Wahid Hasyim who demanded that a clause be added to the Constitution requiring the president to be a Muslim.
62. 'Presiden dan Wakil Presiden Harus Pria', *Kompas*, 7 November 1999: 2.
63. 'Pertemuan Ciganjur Hilangkan Makna SI MPR', *Suara Pembaruan*, 14 November 1998: 3.
64. These results are available online at a number of websites, including <<http://www.electionguide.org/results.php?ID=761>> and <http://www.kpu.go.id/Statistik/statistik_list.php>.
65. PKB leaders were especially disappointed with the party's performance in NU strongholds like Surabaya and Jombang. They accused PDI-P of dirty campaign tactics in persuading many East Javanese that a vote for Megawati (PDI-P) was the same as a vote for Gus Dur (PKB) (Abdul Khaliq, secretary of the PKB parliamentary faction, personal interview, 16 June 1999).
66. Matori Abdul Djalil, personal interview, 6 October 1999.
67. This development was particularly surprising given the deep personal enmity that existed between Wahid and Rais, which went beyond the historic divide between modernists and traditionalists. During the *reformasi* period, the antagonism between them had foiled several promising attempts to create a joint reform platform.
68. In September 1999, PBNU deputy secretary general Arifin Junaidi expressed deep suspicion about the Poros Tengah's ability to make political deals and questioned the very existence of the coalition. 'Actually, is there a Poros Tengah or not? There are various indications that the Poros Tengah's existence must be questioned', he said, citing statements by PAN and PK denying that the Poros Tengah had nominated Wahid ('Megawati Bertemu Ulama dan Kiai NU Yogyakarta', *Kompas*, 6 September 1999: 2).

69. 'Gus Dur: Nahdliyin Wajib Dukung Poros Tengah', *Republika*, 25 August 1999: 1.
70. 'Sekretaris DPW PKB DIY Tuding Matori "Memelintir" Hasil Muspim', *Republika*, 20 August 1999: 4.
71. 'Sekjen PKB Bantah Matori Pelinit Hasil Muspim', *Republika*, 21 August 1999: 2.
72. 'Pengamat: PKB akan Ubah Orientasi Politiknya', *Republika*, 4 September 1999: 1.
73. 'Alwi Shihab: PKB Akan All Out', *Republika*, 5 October 1999: 1.
74. Effendy Choiri, PKB parliamentarian, personal interview, 26 October 1999.
75. 'PBNU Bahas Sikap Matori', *Republika*, 26 August 1999: 1. As always with statements issued by the PBNU, it is important to note who is speaking. While Bagdja, as a senior member of the PBNU, certainly had the authority to issue official statements, he may have had his own agenda. He was known to be close to some groups in the Poros Tengah, and may have been seeking to bolster their interests. He was also known to be seeking appointment as chair of the PBNU at NU's upcoming National Congress (Muktamar), so may have been making these statements to curry favour with Wahid.
76. 'PKB Didesak Respons Aspirasi Warga NU', *Republika*, 1 September 1999: 1.
77. 'PBNU Mensyukuri Kesenian Gus Dur Jadi Capres', *Republika*, 20 October 1999: 3.
78. KH Imron Hamzah, *rais am* of the Syuriah, East Java branch of NU, personal interview, 22 October 1999.
79. Abdul Khaliq, personal interview, 21 October 1999.
80. Information on the Syuriah meetings was provided by KH Imron Hamzah, personal interview, 22 October 1999.
81. Shortly before PKB was established, PBNU deputy chair Rozy Munir had formed what he described as an 'underground group of NU sympathizers' that included PBNU members, members of the intelligence community, military officers and business people to provide 'substantive assistance' to NU and PKB. Originally called Lembaga Casper (Casper Institute, after Casper the ghost), its name was changed to the Institute of National Study (LKB) when its founders decided they needed a more dignified name.
82. Based on conversations I had with Taufiqurrahman Saleh, Ali Maskyur and KH Yusuf Muhammad (members of the PKB parliamentary faction) after this meeting, 19 October 1999.
83. Based on conversations with Matori Abdul Djali's political support team, 23 October 1999.
84. Ali Maskyur, personal interview, 20 October 1999.
85. Abdul Khaliq, personal interview 20 October 1999. According to Khaliq

- (a Matori and Megawati supporter), PKB had decided to formally support Wahid and vote for him in the first stage of voting, but to vote for Megawati in the second stage if the contest was between Wahid and Megawati. If Habibie was still in the race, they would vote for Wahid in both stages.
86. According to *Panji Masyarakat*, Yusril stepped down after having several whispered conversations with Gus Dur in which he received assurances that the latter would not hand over the presidency to Megawati at the last minute ('Apa Boleh Buat, Gus', *Panji Masyarakat*, No. 28, 27 October 1999: 36–40). It is interesting to note that even at the eleventh hour, many people still believed that Wahid's candidacy was some kind of ruse.
 87. Based on conversations with Maskyur Maskub (Lakpesdam), Lilis Husna (Lakpesdam), Syafiq Hasyim (P3M), Hidayaturohman (Ma'arif NU), Syaiful (PMII) and Luluk (KOPRI), 20–23 October 1999.
 88. In addition to ordering the party to endorse his candidacy, in October 1999 Wahid had demanded that the PKB parliamentary faction change its nomination for speaker of the DPR from KH Mahruf Amin to Khofifah Indar Parawansa. Although Matori was angry about this intervention, he did not dare defy Wahid at this point (Matori Abdul Djalil, personal interview, 6 October 1999).
 89. For an analysis of the first year of Wahid's presidency, see Kingsbury (2001), which contains articles by Greg Fealy, Greg Barton, Marcus Meitzner and Arief Budiman. See also Barton's (2002) authorized biography of Wahid, which offers a unique perspective.
 90. 'Presiden: Departemen Agama Telah Menjadi "Pasar"', *Kompas*, 25 October 1999: 1.
 91. For an analysis of Wahid's presidency from a human rights perspective, see Human Rights Watch (2001).
 92. 'Pak Ud Minta Presiden Tarik Usulannya', *Republika*, 28 April 2000: 3.
 93. 'Laksamana Sukardi: Rozy Munir, Kepercayaan Gus Dur yang Dititipkan', *Kompas*, 29 April 2000: 1; 'Laksamana akan Tempuh Jalur Hukum', *Kompas*, 6 May 2000: 1.
 94. 'Sampai Kapan Bisa Tahan, Presiden', *Tempo*, 14 May 2000: 18.
 95. To see Munir's responses to some fairly hard-hitting questions on this issue, see 'Rozy Munir Bantah Terima Suap', *Kompas*, 28 April 2000: 1.
 96. 'Calo-Calo di BPPN', *Panji Masyarakat*, 24 May 2000: 23–33.
 97. 'Sampai Kapan Bisa Tahan, Presiden', *Tempo*, 14 May 2000: 19.
 98. 'Seorang "Korak" di BPPN', *Tempo*, 14 May 2000: 23.
 99. 'Komisi Ombudsman BPPN Minta Gus Dur Klarifikasi Gus Im', *Republika*, 15 May 2000: 1.
 100. Soewondo was alleged to have asked Sapuan for the money in January 2000 at Wahid's request. Said to be for 'strategic assistance' to Aceh, the money

- (as well as both Sapuan and Soewondo) disappeared when the transaction became public. Sapuan was later arrested on 25 April 2001. In a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court, in 2004 Justice Iskandar Kamil found Sapuan not guilty of corruption.
101. PBNU chair Hasyim Muzadi responded to this by issuing veiled threats about the rage that would be unleashed among the masses if the DPR continued along this path ('Kekuatan PBNU Cegah Kemarahan Warga', *Kompas*, 4 February 2001: 1).
 102. 'Indonesia Pres Wahid Makes 5 Minute Speech on National TV', *Associated Press*, 2 May 2001.
 103. 'Wahid Owns Up to Martial Law Order', *Indonesian Observer*, 14 May 2001: 1.
 104. 'General Bimantoro Shows Who's the Boss of National Police', *Jakarta Post*, 15 June 2001: 1.
 105. For two journalistic chronologies of the last days of Wahid's presidency, see 'The Making of a President', *Jakarta Post*, 24 June 2001: 1; and 'Chronology of a Bloodless Parliamentary Coup: Friday & Saturday, 20–21 July 2001', <<http://www.laksamana.net>>, dated 24 June 2001, accessed 13 March 2002. For a unique perspective from within the administration, see Barton (2002: 359–65).
 106. Barton (2001) asserts that the NGO leaders at the palace actually went so far as to write the decree. For a local press report on this issue, see 'Dekrit Presiden itu Datang dari Gus Dur', *Republika*, 25 July 2001: 4.
 107. Maskyur Maskub, telephone interview, 23 July 2001.
 108. Lilis N. Husna, telephone interview, 23 July 2001.
 109. Hanif Dhakiri, personal interview, 25 July 2001.
 110. No formal conclusion was issued; this is my own assessment of the prevailing message of the seminar, which I attended. About half-way through the day, many of the senior foreign diplomats left when it became apparent that no magic 'key' to understanding Wahid would be forthcoming. The *Jakarta Post* later published a book with the same title as the seminar (Bhaskara 2000). It contains short commentaries on Wahid written by a wide range of Indonesian and non-Indonesian intellectuals.
 111. Matori Abdul Jalil, personal interview, 22 October 1999.
 112. 'PKB Pecat Abdul Khaliq Ahmad', *Republika*, 30 July 2001.
 113. *Tempo* reported on 31 July that Wahid and other PKB leaders sent Syaifullah Yusuf to Matori, asking him to lobby for at least three ministerial positions for PKB in the new cabinet. Matori reportedly told Syaifullah to ask Megawati himself, as he was a member of Megawati's PDI-P ('Syaifullah Datangi Matori Minta Jatah Menteri untuk PKB', *Tempo*, 31 July 2001).

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114. According to Abdul Khaliq, in addition to Muchtar Nurjaya and Agus Suplihat, who joined Khaliq and Matori in accepting the results of the special session of the MPR, five PKB members signed a statement of intention to remain in the DPR/MPR. They were Taufiqurrahman Saleh, Aris Azhari Siagian, Susono Yusuf, Saifullah Adnawi and Awaluddin Nurhanan ('Perpecahan di PKB Semakin Tajam?', *Republika*, 27 July 2001: 4).

5

Reformasi and Khittah '26

This chapter takes a closer look at the response to NU's return to politics and Abdurrahman Wahid's rise to the presidency on the part of (1) NU's 30th National Congress (Muktamar); (2) the PBNU and other official NU bodies; (3) Wahid himself; and (4) NU's civil society activists. While NU continued to display the pluralism and complexity that had been its defining characteristics for many decades, to some extent one may observe a weakening of the civil society rhetoric and values promoted before Wahid became president. Especially in the case of the civil society activists, we see a return of the age-old modernist–traditionalist themes.

THE RESPONSE OF THE 30TH MUKTAMAR

In November 1999, one month after Wahid's rise to the presidency, NU held its 30th Muktamar at the Hidayatul Muhtadi'in *pesantren* in Lirboyo, East Java. This was a pivotal point in contemporary NU history, not only because delegates would elect a replacement for Wahid, who had led NU for the past 15 years, but also because NU would have to make a decision

that concerned its own identity. That is, it would have to decide whether to continue to implement Khittah '26 and permit its members to be active in any political party, or formally endorse PKB as NU's only party. The latter would in effect signify a return to a political identity for NU. In the months leading up to the Mukhtamar, this issue was discussed at various seminars and preliminary meetings.

Discussions on Khittah '26 before the Mukhtamar

From July to September 1999, the PBNU held a series of seven seminars around the country to seek public input on topics that would be dealt with at the Mukhtamar. The topics covered were the role of women in Islam; the 1999 elections; strategic planning; Islam and democracy; economic issues; cultural issues; and civil society building.¹ After each seminar, PBNU committee members were supposed to incorporate the results of the debate into a set of recommendations on each topic, to be discussed and approved at the Mukhtamar. But in reality, I found little evidence that the range of views expressed at the seminars were integrated into the Planning Committee's final list of recommendations, which were produced almost entirely behind closed doors by a handful of members. The Planning Committee did, however, publish pocket-sized booklets summarizing seminar proceedings and distribute them widely in both NU and non-NU circles, adding to the appearance of a publicly driven discourse. One could argue that these booklets had a wider distribution and generated more discussion than the formal results of the Mukhtamar, so that in the end, the publicly driven discourse was perhaps the more influential.

Two of the pre-congress seminars dealt, albeit indirectly, with the issue of Khittah '26. The first, called 'NU after the 1999 Elections: Organizational Perspectives', was held in Jakarta on 31 July and 1 August 1999. At this seminar KH Muchid Muzadi, a member of the Syuriah and one of the architects of Khittah '26, argued against any change to the original guidelines but suggested that an official interpretation of the decision should be endorsed by the upcoming Mukhtamar (Muzadi 1999). This was interpreted by many at the seminar as opening the door for a 'rewriting' of Khittah '26, a position not endorsed by all present. Susi Tosari Wijaya, a deputy chair of Muslimat NU and PPP leader, objected that no official interpretation was necessary because Muslimat NU's programs were already operating effectively within the current understanding of Khittah '26. She reiterated Muslimat NU's position that

under Khittah '26, the PBNU could not endorse any particular political party (see Chapter 4). Muzadi responded by saying that the problem with NU was that its autonomous bodies wanted to go off in their own direction, independently of the PBNU. 'We have to establish who is the king (*rojo*) of NU', he retorted.

The second seminar, 'Empowering Civil Society', was held in Yogyakarta on 4–5 September 1999. The three senior NU figures on the Khittah '26 panel, Said Aqil Siradj, Hussein Muhammad and PBNU deputy chair Mustofa Zuhad, dealt only with the religious and economic aspects of Khittah '26, studiously avoiding any reference to its political elements. As the Mukhtamar approached, therefore, it began to look less and less likely that the *political* implications of Khittah '26, at least, would be a central topic of discussion.

Despite being billed as a hot topic for the Mukhtamar several months previously, by November it had become clear that the issue of Khittah '26 was being allowed to fade quietly from the scene. On 2 November 1999, I spoke to Ghaffar Rahman, chair of Ma'arif NU and (I had been told) head of a committee set up to prepare for discussions on Khittah '26 at the congress. While reluctant to discuss the subject in detail, he said that there had been such a committee, but that it had been 'taken over' (*ambil alih*) a couple of months previously by senior members of the PBNU, including Arifin Junaidi, Said Aqil Siradj and Rozy Munir. He understood that their agenda was to sponsor a 'rewriting' of Khittah '26 to allow for a special relationship between NU and PKB. However, as far as he knew this had not happened, and all discussion of Khittah '26 had been dropped.

On 4 November, Mufid Busyairi, a senior leader of Lakpesdam and chair of the congress's Recommendations Committee, told me that there had never been a Khittah '26 committee as such, only an effort to revise the Lampung version of Khittah '26 to allow for more political patronage of PKB by NU.² Written at the 1992 Lampung National Meeting of Ulama (Munas), the latter was an exegesis of the Khittah '26 decision elaborating its meaning point by point. It is generally accepted that it presented political activity in a much more favourable light than the original 1984 decision, describing it as a 'moral and religious' activity that involved the 'development of values of freedom ... and democracy'. Thus, the Lampung version of the Khittah '26 decision was seen as undoing much of the earlier work to move NU away from formal politics (PBNU 1992: 161–2).

When I spoke to him on 10 November 1999, Rozy Munir, deputy head of the congress's Organization Committee, also professed to know nothing about a Khittah '26 committee. When pressed, he confirmed that there had been an effort to review the decision to accommodate the fact of PKB's existence. However, the issue had become 'too political', so the subject of PKB had been subsumed under another category and discussion of Khittah '26 dropped.³ During the course of the Mukhtamar, Arifin Junaidi, secretary of the Organization Committee, told me that senior members of the PBNU had 'removed' (*cabut*) discussion of Khittah '26 from the agenda for the Mukhtamar because they were trying to keep NU from becoming too involved in politics. He said that they had realized that by putting Khittah '26 back on the table, they would be opening up the possibility of the guidelines being changed to allow NU to become a political party once again.⁴

Organization of the Mukhtamar

The Mukhtamar itself took place on 21–26 November 1999.⁵ I arrived at the *pesantren* in Lirboyo on 19 November, two days before the congress was due to begin, to find everything in chaos. Accommodation had not been arranged for committee members and all of the hotels in the nearby city of Kediri were fully booked, leaving many delegates scrambling to find a place to sleep.⁶ Participants were unable to obtain ID badges allowing them into the congress, and some materials, including the Planning Committee recommendations, did not arrive until Monday, the second day of the congress. Many people remarked to me that this was the most disorganized congress they had ever attended. Much of the confusion can be put down to politically inspired mis- or non-communication between Jakarta and East Java committee members. KH Hasyim Muzadi was a candidate for the position of chair of the PBNU and the head of the East Java-based committees; KH Said Aqil Siradj was a competing candidate for the position of chair and the head of the Jakarta-based committees. The political conflict between the two camps exacerbated the latent tensions between Jakarta and East Java NU leaders, at the expense of the administration of the congress.

The Mukhtamar was opened by President Abdurrahman Wahid around midday on 21 November 1999. By 6 a.m. a steady stream of people dressed in their finest were already thronging the roads and pathways leading to

the *pesantren*. They were not official participants, so would not be allowed onto the grounds; nevertheless, they stood in the sun in huge crowds for hours, waiting to greet the newly installed fourth President of Indonesia. Meanwhile, within the already steaming auditorium, Ibu Aisyah Wahid, head of Muslimat NU, was complaining about the seating arrangements. 'This is an NU event, not a state event, so we should be given precedence over the district head and governor', she insisted. Organizers recognized the logic of this claim and moved Muslimat NU's seating a few spaces closer to the stage.

Wahid's speech was unremarkable except for the fact that it sounded much more like the speech of a chair of NU than a president of Indonesia — full of praise for NU's achievements, taking a couple of indirect swipes at Muhammadiyah, and 'accidentally' omitting to mention Amien Rais when welcoming the leading dignitaries.

The Accountability Report

The actual work of the Mukhtar did not begin until the following day. The first item on the agenda was the presentation of the PBNU's accountability report (*laporan pertanggungjawaban*), to be followed by official responses from the provincial branches of NU and a vote of acceptance or rejection.⁷ The 76-page report reviewed the board's activities and positions over the previous five-year period (1994–99). It was accompanied by a longer report detailing the activities and budgets of NU's autonomous bodies and institutes over the previous five years.

The report refers to the 'extremely understandable desire' (*keinginan yang sangat wajar*) on the part of NU members to join the political process, a desire that had been met by the formation of PKB (PBNU 1999c: 18). No mention is made of any of the other NU parties that had been formed, although the report states obliquely that:

Once PKB had been declared, the responsibility of the PBNU to facilitate the formation of a political party for NU members was fulfilled. Therefore the PBNU does not have any further obligation towards other NU members who wish to establish other parties (PBNU 1999c: 19).

The report notes that some NU members felt that the PBNU had violated Khittah '26 in 'facilitating' the formation of PKB, and states that it had addressed their concerns by instructing NU officials (*pengurus*) at all levels to choose between their posts and a leadership position in PKB. 'In relation

to that', the report says, 'the PBNU itself did the fair thing and began with itself'; it then details which members of the PBNU leadership had stepped aside to take up positions within PKB (PBNU 1999c: 19–20).⁸

The report gives an account of Wahid's nomination and election as president of Indonesia that firmly establishes the PBNU's 'official line'. It first notes the concerns of many in NU about Wahid's poor health, but explains that:

Abdurrahman Wahid himself did not feel capable of deciding whether he was willing to become a presidential candidate. Therefore, he turned the decision entirely over to the senior *ulama* who were known as being his strongest supporters (PBNU 1999c: 23).

The report accurately describes the slow and cautious process of the *ulama* in reaching this decision. But it then declares:

As long as the *ulama* had not made a final decision, KH Abdurrahman Wahid himself appeared relaxed. That is, he did not carry out any unusual political manoeuvres, including pushing PKB, the party he had declared, to nominate him. Truly this was not from pretence, but from a sincere desire to wait patiently for the decision of the *ulama* (PBNU 1999c: 24).

This account blatantly ignores the behind-the-scenes pressure Wahid had placed on PKB, and his apparent disregard for the attempts of the *ulama* to dissuade him from seeking the presidency (see Chapter 4).

Although the PBNU report had only just been handed out, the session chair announced that responses would begin immediately, by province. Participants were not given any time to read the report, to discuss their province's position or to decide who would present their response. With very little objection made to this, however, for the next eight hours provincial representatives made short speeches in response to a report they had not read. Unsurprisingly, at the end of the day the report was accepted unanimously.⁹

The Committee Sessions

Committee sessions began on the following day, 23 November, with five committees meeting simultaneously to discuss and revise the set of recommendations prepared by the Jakarta-based Planning Committee.¹⁰ For our purposes here, two issues of importance were discussed at these meetings: the position of women in the organizational leadership structure of NU; and the relationship between NU and PKB. In both cases, the

decision-making processes and outcomes provide insight into where power lies within NU, and show how the civil society and Khittah '26 discourses have been used and discarded by elite NU leaders according to their own interests.

Debate on the Position of Women within the Structure of NU

The debate on a greater role for women in the formal leadership structure cannot be divorced from the events taking place in Indonesia at the time. Just before the Muktamar was held, Indonesia had come very close to electing a woman as president, with the formal support of PKB. NU's theological stance on the permissibility of a female head of state was deeply if not entirely informed by its contemporary political interests at the time. This topic had first gained the attention of NU's *kiai* and politicians in 1997, when Wahid escorted Soeharto's daughter Tutut to several *pesantren* and made strategic comments about her potential as a future leader (see Chapter 3). Shortly afterwards, at the Lombok Munas, NU's *ulama* issued a *fatwa* declaring that Islam did not prohibit a woman from becoming head of state.¹¹ But in October 1998 the government-backed Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) took the opposite point of view, declaring that Islam did not permit a woman to become president (see Chapter 4). Its position may have been linked to the modernist Muslim parties' opposition to Megawati Soekarnoputri, who was already a serious contender for the presidency. At that point NU was allied with Megawati's party, PDI-P, and lent its legitimizing voice to a series of seminars held by NU women activists to protest the MUI *fatwa*. As the 1999 Muktamar approached, therefore, NU's deliberations on issues of gender were coloured by the very real possibility of a woman becoming president.

When NU held its pre-congress seminar on gender-related *fiqh* in Baturaden in July 1999, it was widely assumed that the underlying political purpose of the seminar was to establish a theological foundation that would allow NU to support Megawati in the upcoming presidential elections (PBNU 1999a).¹² While participants stopped short of endorsing Megawati, they concluded that women should be encouraged to occupy leadership positions in the political, economic and religious spheres, and that discrimination to keep women out of public positions was not Islamic and should not be condoned.¹³ Interestingly, at this seminar Wahid himself made a strong statement in favour of a woman president, saying, 'I support

Mega not because of politics, but because Islamic law allows it'.¹⁴ As will be discussed later in this chapter, he was to say just the opposite a few months later.

This strong support for women's public and political leadership was reinforced by two press conferences held during the Mukhtamar, both on 22 November.¹⁵ At these events, Fatayat NU and KH Hussein Muhammad released the results of two separate, gender-related research projects providing theological support for female leadership. This provoked much discussion among NU's women's groups about the lack of leadership positions for women in NU itself. Fatayat NU suggested that the congress might provide a good opportunity to demand female representation on the PBNU. There were, after all, precedents for women sitting on the board: Niai Fatimah had sat on the Syuriah in 1950, and Nyai Khoiriyah Hasyim had sat on the Tanfidziyah in 1960.

Although there was strong support for this proposal, some women felt that there had not been enough preliminary informal lobbying among the *kiai* for such a move to succeed. Nevertheless, the women nominated H. Ermalena, a deputy chair of Fatayat NU, to speak at a press conference on the issue, leaving it up to her to decide whether or not to make a formal demand for female representation on the PBNU. The next day, Ermalena delivered a strong call for women's leadership in public positions in general, but stopped short of calling for this within the PBNU, saying instead that 'women need to figure out where they can be most effective', a somewhat limp conclusion that left many members of Fatayat NU disappointed.¹⁶

Muslimat NU leaders also held a press conference on the issue, at which they were much more bold in demanding a greater number of leadership positions for women. The chair of Muslimat NU, Ibu Aisyah Hamid Baidlowi, called for NU's constitution to be revised to allow a Muslimat NU representative to sit on the PBNU. 'Thus far we have only been considered an autonomous body, which means we can't vote', she said. 'There are many female leaders now who are just as good as the male leaders'.¹⁷

Neither the pre-congress seminar on gender-related *fiqh* nor the extra-congress efforts of Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU appear to have had the desired effect. According to Luluk Nur Hamidah, a member of the Recommendations Committee and the chair of KOPRI, the committee had decided to submit a formal recommendation that women be included on the PBNU.¹⁸ However, upon arriving at the congress and receiving a bound

copy of the draft recommendations, she discovered that no mention of this was to be found. According to her, this clause must have been erased at some point between the final meeting of the Recommendations Committee and the printing of the draft recommendations. But when I spoke to him later the same day, the coordinator of the Recommendations Committee, Mufid Busyairi, insisted that no such decision had been made. He claimed that Luluk had not attended meetings, so would not know what had been decided.¹⁹ He said that the Recommendations Committee was waiting for the results of discussions by the Religious Issues (Technical) Committee before determining whether the matter should be entered into the final deliberations.²⁰

On the same day, I attended the open sessions of the Planning Committee, where there was considerable support from both provincial and district delegates for women being included on the NU board. The following day, however, when the formulating team (*tim perumus*) met to sift through all of the input from delegates on the previous day and compose a final draft to be endorsed at the plenary session, the subject of women got short shrift. When the subject of gender was raised after about three hours of discussion of other issues, the team spent several minutes making lewd jokes.²¹ Eventually they agreed on a vague statement supporting women at 'all levels of decision making', without including any specific details on how women could be integrated into the structure of the PBNU. The final decision, as approved in the plenary session the following day and printed in the official results of the Mukhtamar, noted that women and men were created equal and that Muslimat NU, Fatayat NU and IPPNU had rights of participation equal to those of the men's organizations. Furthermore, 'the Mukhtamar encourages all levels of NU leadership, from the subdistrict level up to the PBNU, to involve Muslimat NU, Fatayat NU and IPPNU in organizational decision making' (PBNU 1999b: 98).

Thus, on both the formal and informal fronts, the women of NU lost their bid to be included officially in the organizational leadership structure of NU. This was widely remarked upon as a defining feature of the Mukhtamar, especially among activists. What was not so widely noted was that the results of the Baturaden seminar were included almost verbatim in the draft recommendations of the Religious Issues (Technical) Committee, which approved them with only minor changes. This was a significant victory, as the language of the Baturaden decision was very strong with respect to the principles of gender equality within Islam and

very supportive of women occupying leadership positions in the public domain. However, the decisions of the committee were not included in the official results of the Mukhtar, and are available only to those who received a copy of its draft recommendations at the congress.²²

Debate on the Relationship between NU and PKB

A second important decision emanating from the Recommendations Committee concerned the relationship between NU and PKB. As with the issue of the role of women, this had been much talked about before the Mukhtar, both in the press and among NU leaders. As discussed earlier, the subject of Khittah '26, which implicitly underlies this relationship, was significant first in its visibility in the lead-up to the congress, then in its invisibility during the congress proceedings. It is clear that at one point the organizers expected it to be a central topic of discussion. As discussed above, it was the subject of two of the pre-congress seminars. Moreover, it was central both to the official theme of the Mukhtar ('Deepening the Implementation of NU's Guidelines (*Khittah*) to Achieve a Civil Indonesia That Is Democratic and Just') and to its subtheme ('Actualizing NU's Guidelines (*Khittah*) for the Empowerment of a Civil and Good Society') (PBNU 1999d). Apart from this, however, no mention was made of Khittah '26 in a formal sense at the Mukhtar — no official discussion of Khittah '26 took place, no attempt was made to 'rewrite' the guidelines and no official interpretation was proposed.

The Recommendations Committee studiously avoided the subject of Khittah '26 and its implications for the relationship between NU and PKB in its official set of recommendations, saying only the following (in the section on politics):

- 5 NU members are encouraged to exercise their political rights freely in accordance with their political aspirations and in a critical and rational manner.
- 6 All NU leaders from the subdistrict to the national level are ordered to maintain NU as a social-religious organization, not a political organization, and because of this to see that NU remains critical of all parties, and that it controls the party that is seen as the political vehicle for its members (PBNU 1999e: 9).

The last part of point (6) is a clear if indirect reference to PKB. It recognizes, almost reluctantly, the relationship between NU and PKB, and specifies that the former will control the latter.

That this position was not truly reflective or representative of the majority of provincial and district leaders became clear during an open session on 22 November, when delegate after delegate rose to express a desire for NU to officially endorse PKB as its primary political vehicle. Among the most strident voices were those of the delegates from East Java, who demanded that NU members be required to join 'the party formed by the PBNU'. They distributed a printed copy of their suggested revisions to the draft recommendations, including the following changes to points (5) and (6) above.

- 5 Nahdlatul Ulama as a social organization (*jamiyah*) is not tied organizationally to any political or social organization. Nevertheless, the establishment of several political parties after the fading of the New Order in no way lessens the political freedom of NU. The *Khittah* explain that 'Every member of NU is a citizen with political rights protected by law'. With regard to NU members exercising their political rights, they must do so in a responsible way, to encourage the emergence of a lifestyle that is democratic, constitutional, law abiding, and capable of developing a mechanism of consultation and consensus (*musyawarah dan mufakat*) for problem solving. The channelling of political aspirations is a personal right that is guaranteed by the Constitution of NU with constant reference to the message of the *Khittah*, and to the Nine Political Guidelines for NU members as determined by the 28th Muktamar in Yogyakarta.
- 6 The existence of a political party should be viewed as an effort to actualize political energies, and as such should be considered carefully as a potentially effective way to channel the political aspirations of NU members, while not violating the spirit of *Khittah* '26. The experience of the East Java branch of NU demonstrates that concentrating NU's political aspirations in one seat of power will result in a great deal of power. Therefore the Muktamar urges that the party that has received the blessing of the *Ulama*, that was the only party for NU members post-*reformasi*, should be accepted as the only party for NU and its members (PBNU 1999f: 56).

The marked differences between the two versions again exemplify the tensions between the Jakarta and East Java branches of NU. During the general elections in June, PKB had won an overwhelming victory in East Java, where it had gained around half its national proportion of votes (Cribb 2000: 189). It is therefore not surprising that the East Java branch of NU was strongly in favour of developing closer formal links with the party, even if this brought it into conflict with 'head office' in Jakarta.

When the open sessions were over, the formulating team met for three hours to finalize the official recommendations of the congress. Much of their time was spent hammering out a compromise between the Jakarta and East Java positions on PKB, reflected in the final passage submitted to and approved by the plenary session:

- 5 NU members are urged to exercise their political rights in a free, critical and rational manner in accordance with their culture and political aspirations, while constantly holding to the principles of Khittah NU 1926 and the Nine Political Guidelines for NU members determined by the 28th Muktamar of NU in Yogyakarta, *and also keeping in mind the historical relationship between NU and the party whose establishment was facilitated by the PBNU.*
- 6 All NU leaders from the subdistrict to the national level are ordered to maintain NU as a social-religious organization, not a political organization, and because of this to see that NU remains critical of all parties, and that it controls the party that is seen as the political vehicle for its members. *For this purpose there should be a 'political committee' within the organization of NU (PBNU 1999b: 70).* [emphasis added]

This was a typical NU compromise, allowing both sides to feel they had gained a victory. Khittah '26 was not revised, and indeed was upheld as fundamentally informing NU's political position. PKB was not explicitly endorsed, although its special 'historical relationship' with NU was acknowledged officially. Mufid Busyairi spent the rest of the afternoon typing up the final draft to be presented to the plenary session, under the watchful gaze of a delegate from East Java who stood two feet away the entire time.

The plenary session on the following day, 25 November, took only a few hours. The chair of each committee read out the results, and two or three people were permitted to make comments. After that the gavel fell and the results were approved without change. There was no further debate or discussion about the issues raised, and everyone seemed to be in the mood to get the session finished as quickly as possible. The proceedings were disrupted only twice. The first disturbance took place when a delegate from Maluku began shouting that the Muktamar and NU were paying no attention to the problems in his region. After a few attempts to calm him, security guards were called to escort him from the room.²³ The second disturbance took place when the chair of the Organization Committee read out the portion of its decision saying that NU would not

change its basis (*asas*) to Islam, but would retain Pancasila as its symbolic foundational basis. At that point several people began yelling in protest, then the entire congregation of delegates stood up and began to move towards the podium. Rozy Munir, who was chairing the plenary session, immediately lowered his gavel and temporarily closed the session. He told the assembly that the issue would be referred to a group of senior *ulama* who were to meet later that day at the home of Kiai Idris (the most senior *kiai* of the Lirboyo *pesantren*).²⁴

At this meeting, NU did in fact change its basis to Islam, but this was not announced publicly. During the course of the afternoon I heard both that NU had changed its basis to Islam and that it had not. When I saw a copy of the official results of the Mukhtamar, I understood the confusion. The relevant section says:

NU as a Religious Mass-based Organization (*Jam'iyah Diniyah Islamiyah*) bases itself on Islam according to *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* and holding to one of the four schools: Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i and Hanbali. In its relations with the nation and the state, NU is guided by belief in one supreme God, just and civilized humanity, the national unity of Indonesia, democracy led by wisdom and prudence through consultation and representation, and social justice for all (PBNU 1999b: 106).

That is, although the document does indeed say that NU 'bases itself on Islam' (*berasas Islam*), in the following sentence it says that NU is 'guided by' (*berpedoman*) five principles that are not explicitly stated as being — but in fact are — the Pancasila. Once again, a typical 'NU-style' compromise.

The PBNU Elections

That night the delegates began what was arguably the most important task of the Mukhtamar: electing the PBNU officials who would serve for the next five years. The top three positions — *rais am* of the Syuriah, deputy *rais am* of the Syuriah and chair (*ketua umum*) of the Tanfidziyah — were to be decided by a direct vote involving two rounds of voting. Candidates who received at least 40 votes in the first round would pass through to the second and final round of voting. The *rais am* and deputy *rais am* were to be chosen first. Between the first and second rounds of voting for the position of chair of the Tanfidziyah, delegates would be given an opportunity to approve all of the candidates who had gained more than 40 votes. Once

these three positions had been filled, the successful candidates would meet with four senior NU officials (*formateur*) to appoint the remaining members of the Syuriah, Tanfidziyah and Mustasyar.²⁵ A complete list of the membership of the PBNU for 1999–2004 is given in Appendix 4.

The election process was scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. but in typical fashion began very late. The first round of voting did not begin until close to midnight. The election of the *rais am* was the easiest of the three — only one name had been put forward with any seriousness, that of KH Sahal Mahfudz, who was then deputy *rais am*. It was suggested that he be elected by acclamation, but after a protest from the floor, a vote was held. Approximately 17 other people were nominated, but none received the requisite 40 votes, so at 1:15 a.m. KH Sahal was declared *rais am*. The election of the deputy *rais am* was almost as much of a shoe-in. On 23 November Arifin Junaidi told me that KH Endin Fachruddin Masthuro would be named deputy *rais am*, as he had just received the ‘order straight from Gus Dur’ (*perintah langsung dari Gus Dur*). Unsurprisingly, other voters had somehow also received the same message, and although there were 32 other nominees, KH Endin was named deputy *rais am* with 133 out of 324 votes.

By this time it was well into the wee hours of the morning. Some participants wanted to postpone the Tanfidziyah elections at least until after sunrise, but the majority vetoed this suggestion with a resounding cry of ‘Continue!’ (*Terus!*). Voting for the position of chair of the Tanfidziyah thus began. After the first round, the tally was as follows: 149 votes for Hasyim Muzadi, 72 votes for Said Aqil Siradj, 56 votes for Salahuddin Wahid, 21 votes for Mustofa Bisri,²⁶ 22 votes for Achmad Bagdja, and one each for Hasib Wahab Hasbullah, Abu Hasan and Kusnan. At this point it was 5 a.m., and the session was closed for morning prayers. When it reopened at 6:30 a.m., Salahuddin Wahid withdrew from the race, citing a lack of experience. Thus the second round was between Hasyim Muzadi and Said Aqil Siradj. Most delegates expected Hasyim to win, as Abdurrahman Wahid had made it clear that the head of the East Java regional branch was his pick.²⁷ Nevertheless Siradj had a lot of support, and it was still possible that he might pull ahead, especially if the Salahuddin camp threw its votes his way.²⁸ The atmosphere in the auditorium was therefore tense as the votes were counted. At 8:30 a.m. the results were announced: Muzadi had won by 215 votes to 105.²⁹ The hardy members who were still present and awake let out cheers of excitement.

Groggy-eyed participants leaving the auditorium after the vote crossed paths with somewhat fresher members who had gone home earlier for a bath and perhaps a half-hour of sleep before returning to prepare the auditorium for the closing ceremony. It was at the closing ceremony later that morning that the PBNU line-up for the next five years was announced (see Appendix 4). In his speech, the new *rais am*, KH Sahal Mahfudz, called for NU to rethink its position towards the state. Until then, he said, NU had maintained a critical role towards the state. While this should continue, with Abdurrahman Wahid now in the president's seat, NU must also support his efforts and help make his presidency a success.³⁰ Coming from the mouth of the most senior official in NU, this confirmed the fears of many NU activists that as long as Wahid was president, they might have to curb their criticism of the government. The Mukhtamar was closed by Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri, who thanked NU for supporting 'not just me personally but all women' with regard to the question of a female political leader.

Many of the participants I spoke to after the congress felt that it had been an anticlimax because of the complete lack of debate on the issue of Khittah '26. It had been touted several months before the congress as the most contentious issue to be discussed, but in fact there was almost no formal or informal discussion of Khittah '26 as such. The debate on the relationship between PKB and NU took place without any reference to Khittah '26, despite the obvious connection. This seems to indicate that the 'powers that be' in NU had realized that any formal recognition of a relationship between NU and PKB would violate the spirit and essence of Khittah '26 — a fact that was recognized by many of the participants as well. In order to achieve their political goals while at the same time maintaining the sacrosanct status of Khittah '26 within NU, they had therefore simply removed it from the agenda as an item of discussion. This reveals simultaneously the importance of Khittah '26 to the identity of NU and the ease with which it could be manipulated to fit NU's political needs.

One final significant development at the 1999 Mukhtamar was the heightened 'Islamic' tone of the results. This was reflected in several important decisions. One was the decision taken by the Religious Issues (Technical) Committee to forbid inter-religious prayer meetings of the kind frequently held at Wahid's home in Ciganjur before he became president.

This kind of event was deemed to be in conflict with sharia, and therefore forbidden (*haram*). The same committee decided that it was *haram* for a non-Muslim to be a political leader in Indonesia; it also decided to recommend that the government declare the whole of Ramadan a national holiday for schools. Finally, the Mukhtamar decided to reinstate Islam as NU's fundamental basis, as discussed above.

These decisions reveal a shift on the part of NU towards a more visible and symbolic expression of Islam, and a fairly dramatic shift away from the religiously tolerant, nationally oriented and pluralist discourse promoted by Wahid and his followers over the previous decade and a half. Many of NU's young activists and intellectuals considered these decisions to represent a huge step backward for NU. As one young intellectual told me: 'These decisions undermine the values that we've been struggling for over the past 15 years'.³¹

On the other hand, it can also be argued that the shift merely reflected a process of greater democratization within NU. It is well known that many of the low to mid-level *kiai* and *ulama* who made up the quantitative, if not qualitative, substance of NU did not agree with Wahid's efforts to revitalize and in some cases revolutionize traditionalist Islam. It is also true that the discourse of civil society, secular government and religious tolerance was an elite discourse, confined largely to the urban-based younger generation of intellectuals and activists plus a few notable *kiai*. Thus, as Wahid stepped down from his position of almost supreme authority within NU, and in the context of a general heightening of Islamic activity and Islamic public presence nationally, it may be that NU was simply articulating a position that was more reflective of the views of the majority of its *ulama*, rather than the position of the elite group of intellectuals who had been so influential over the previous 15 years.

The Mukhtamar offered other insights into the manner in which power is wielded within NU. At first glance, the way in which decisions were made appeared to reflect a bottom-up and representative process. After all, the low to mid-level leaders in NU's district branches controlled the vote through their numbers, so the decisions taken at the congress should have been representative of the mainstream NU membership. This appearance was further reinforced by the absence from open committee sessions of any high-level *kiai* or NU leaders, leaving the discourse and its outcome almost entirely in the hands of the provincial and district delegates.

Upon closer observation, however, it became clear that the elite members of NU did not *need* to attend the open sessions, and did not *need* to debate issues on the floor. This was because the agenda was shaped in the lead-up to the congress by the Jakarta-based Planning Committee (which prepared recommendations for discussion at the congress), and towards the end of the congress by the formulating team (which prepared the final results for submission to the plenary session). Both consisted of high-level activists and politicians appointed by the most senior PBNU members. Moreover, in spite of the long hours of arduous vote casting and vote counting to elect the top three leaders of the PBNU, it became clear that there was never really any question about who would be elected, because the person who held the highest position in NU (and Indonesia) had already made his preferences clear.

The National Congress of KMNU

It was perhaps out of frustration at this top-down approach disguised as democratic process that NU's 30th Mukhtar included for the first time a national congress for the Young Generation of NU (KMNU). It was held in a small building about 100 metres from the official grounds. There, from 21 to 26 November, hundreds of activists from Lakpesdam, P3M, LKPSM, ELSAD, LKiS and other NU bodies met to discuss issues of relevance to NU, as well as national issues such as regional autonomy and the role of the military in the state.

This congress was widely referred to as a 'protest congress' (*mukhtar tandingan*), a perception that its organizers strongly rejected in their bulletin, *Srakal*:

We have no intention of protesting against the Mukhtar, but rather intend to complement the Mukhtar. We realized that many NU members ... were not able to participate in and have access to the Mukhtar. We ... hope to fulfil some of their intellectual and social expectations, which may not have been met fully by the Mukhtar (*Srakal*, 23 November 1999: 1).

A central theme of the KMNU congress was how NU should respond to the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid. As described in Chapter 4, many NU activists had greeted Wahid's rise to the presidency with dismay. Suddenly their role and identity as critic and watchdog of the government,

identifying government excesses and cases of corruption, had been severely complicated. As *Srakal* explains:

Not only is there a psychological conflict due to the *pesantren* tradition in which a *santri* will almost never directly criticize his *kiai*, but there is also a feeling of deep obligation (*hutang budi*) on the part of NU towards Gus Dur, who has raised NU to a position of greatness ('NU Kritik Presiden Tapi Tidak Gus Dur', *Srakal*, 22 November 1999: 2).

As the congress continued, two main streams of opinion emerged. The first was that NU's activists did not need to change their critical stance towards the government or alter any of their activities simply because Wahid had become president. It would be good for him to have critics who were seeking to provide constructive rather than destructive criticism. The second stream of opinion was that Wahid's presidency would need to be protected from the resurgence of reactionary forces. During the New Order period, the state had been a coercive institution whose oppressive power had to be challenged by civil society; under Wahid, those coercive forces remained the 'status quo'³² even though they were not part of the state as such. Because Wahid, and the civil society values he endorsed, would undoubtedly come under attack from those forces, NU's activists had a responsibility to support the president in the face of such challenges.³³ Later in this chapter I will discuss manifestations of both of these approaches during the course of Wahid's presidency.

THE RESPONSE OF THE PBNU

NU's 30th Mukhtar at Lirboyo afforded some early indications that the privileged position civil society discourse had enjoyed within NU over the past decade and half would change, due both to Wahid stepping down as chair of NU and to his almost simultaneous ascent to the presidency. Over the ensuing months the effects of this change were evident in the PBNU, in the autonomous bodies of NU, in Wahid himself and among NU's pro-civil society activists and intellectuals.

During and just after the Mukhtar, PBNU officials issued several statements reassuring members and the public that NU would continue to maintain its critical stance towards the government. For example, PBNU deputy chair KH Wahid Zaini promised that for the next five years, the Syuriah would continue to 'maintain intense controls' on PKB.

‘Furthermore’, he added, ‘the PBNU can call Gus Dur if he issues a policy that we don’t understand. We will ask for an explanation about the policy’.³⁴ Nevertheless, senior activists almost immediately saw signs that the PBNU was repositioning NU as a support structure for Wahid rather than maintaining its role as an autonomous counterbalance to the state.³⁵ One week after Wahid’s inauguration I attended the opening of Lakpesdam’s new office. At this event, keynote speaker Rozy Munir gently chastised Lakpesdam for being too political and focusing too heavily on training grassroots activists, rather than maintaining the library and archives as was its original mandate. Lakpesdam’s leaders told me later that this was the first time the organization had ever been criticized for developing a cadre of activists, even during the Soeharto or Habibie presidencies.

Incidents Involving the Media

There were other early and more public signs indicating that the concerns of activists about the commitment of the PBNU (and NU more generally) to building a strong civil society were valid. One week after Wahid was inaugurated, a popular Saturday-night comedy show on a national television station, Indosiar, broadcast an obvious parody of the president, portraying him as a blind village chief stumbling around and acting like an idiot. Immediately after the show ended, Indosiar received a phone call from an unnamed NU member complaining that the show was offensive to the president, and threatening an attack by Banser’s paramilitaries if the station did not issue a public apology. Minutes later, the director of the station apologized publicly on air. This was followed a few hours later by another on-air apology delivered by the comedians themselves to several high-ranking NU officials.

Significantly, in local media accounts of this incident, the comedians were reported as having expressed gratitude that ‘the PBNU allowed us to continue performing’;³⁶ the notable point being that it was the PBNU, not the government, that had taken action against them. In his statement of apology, the head of the troupe noted that the press had become accustomed over the past two years of *reformasi* to ‘recording social conditions, ... We forgot that the situation has now changed. Maybe we went too far. We lost control’. This was both an apology and a signal that such apologies had not been necessary since the Soeharto era ended.³⁷ While seemingly

trivial, this incident set the tone for a pattern of personal interventions and threats that would become more common, alarming many NU and non-NU observers.

In May 2000, a more serious breach of press freedom took place. *Jawa Pos*, a regional newspaper based in East Java, printed erroneous information implicating KH Hasyim Muzadi, the chair of NU, in involvement in a corruption scandal. The headline of the article blazed: 'After Six Months of Governing, Is Corruption Beginning to Overcome Gus Dur? PKB Upset, PBNU Forms Clarification Team'.³⁸ The article speculated on rumours of corruption involving those around Wahid, and stated that KH Hasyim Muzadi had been the beneficiary of the \$350,000 missing from Bulog (see Chapter 4). The paper was actually quoting information published previously in *Tempo*, a prestigious weekly magazine, unaware that *Tempo* had already retracted and apologized for these statements.

The *Jawa Pos* article sparked outrage among NU members in East Java, leading to the occupation of the newspaper's offices by members of Banser, the destruction of some computers and facilities, and a one-day delay in printing. Apparently the latter was due to escalating tempers rather than any planned effort to close the *Jawa Pos* down. According to a chronology of the incident provided by NU's Institute for Legal Training and Aid (LPBH),³⁹ on 7 May 2000 a delegation from Ansor visited the newsroom and, after protracted negotiations with deputy editor Arief Afandi, secured an agreement whereby the *Jawa Pos* would print a half-page apology the next day. Ultimately, however, Afandi was unwilling to approve the apology because (he said) the article had been the fault of the graphic design department, which was not under his jurisdiction. At this point someone in the Ansor delegation shouted that if he was not willing to apologize, then he should not publish the next day's paper at all. Afandi responded by saying that indeed he would not, and he was true to his word. Later on, the *Jawa Pos* did publish a half-page apology, but this did nothing to dampen the animosity on both sides.⁴⁰

The members of NU argued that their reaction was justified because *Jawa Pos* was 'anti-NU' and often printed material harmful to the organization. According to them, the newspaper repeatedly misrepresented NU in print. It had cast aspersions on Wahid's motivations in escorting Soeharto's daughter to several *pesantren* in East Java in 1997, for example, and in early 1998 had accused NU of being late in joining

the *reformasi* movement. According to the activists, the newspaper had published false information about them so often that they had felt forced to take action.⁴¹

The response of other sections of NU to this incident varied widely, with the most obvious determining factor being location. The Surabaya-based activist group ELSAD stated that the actions of Banser were 'semi-legitimate' and initiated a campaign among NU organizations and members in East Java to boycott the *Jawa Pos*.⁴² However, Abdullah Anas, the Jakarta-based head of IPNU, called on Ansor to punish the 'rogue elements' (*oknum*) in Banser that had carried out this 'anarchic action'.⁴³ He complained that this violation of the rule of law made NU look bad, and called for a re-evaluation of the very existence of Banser. KH Hasyim Muzadi, having demanded and received an apology from *Jawa Pos*, now issued a statement guaranteeing that Banser would be kept under control and would not promote 'civil militarism'.⁴⁴

In spite of NU's general shift from a critical to a supportive stance towards the presidency, the PBNU did in fact criticize the excesses of the president on several occasions, especially after the initial honeymoon period when public support for Wahid had begun to wane. For the most part it was the *kiai* that felt they had the authority to rebuke Wahid. For example, in November 1999 the deputy *rais am* of the Syuriah, Sahal Mahfudz, told a group of senior *ulama* in the Langitan Forum, very straightforwardly, that:

Gus Dur must change his approach to leadership. He is now president, not just the head of NU. I also ask the *kiai* to give Gus Dur more input, because his success in leading the nation will directly affect NU, the *ulama* and the *pesantren* ('Hati-hati Keluarkan Pernyataan', *Kompas*, 15 November 1999: 1).

The forum issued a statement asking Wahid to be 'more cautious when making public statements' and recommending that he communicate with either Amien Rais (speaker of the MPR) or Akbar Tanjung (speaker of the DPR) before releasing public statements. For the *ulama* to urge consultation with modernist leader Amien Rais was extraordinary, and indicates their high level of anxiety about Wahid's performance as president.

Later on in Wahid's presidency, as criticism of him mounted on all sides, PBNU deputy chair Andi Jamaro appeared to distance NU from the president, saying that the board did not have to take responsibility for every statement and policy the president issued, since Wahid was no longer

the head of NU and no longer spoke officially for the organization.⁴⁵ In his next breath, however, Jamaro expressed a key sentiment felt by many in NU — that while Wahid said and did many things that NU leaders and members disagreed with (such as his attempt to remove the ban on communism), ‘if those things are exploited in order to topple Gus Dur, NU will definitely support him’.

This provides an important insight into the feelings of many in NU in the final months of Wahid’s presidency. They were disappointed and disillusioned with the president, and often confused, but in the face of what looked to them like a conspiracy to oust Wahid inelegantly from the presidency, they fell in behind him in perfect solidarity. In many ways it seemed that the external criticism (though often identical in content to that heard from the mouths of NU members themselves) triggered the historical psychology of the modernist–traditionalist conflict, and as such was characterized as a ‘conspiracy’ against NU as a whole. Eventually, therefore, there was little room for those in NU to acknowledge that Wahid had to take ownership of his own fall from power.

THE RESPONSE OF WAHID

Despite the board’s occasional attempts to play a restraining or critiquing role, it must be noted that for the most part NU as an organization could be seen primarily as a support structure for Wahid. It was not just the NU elites and *ulama* that shifted their stance on NU’s role *vis-à-vis* the state, however; Wahid himself appeared to take a different line on a number of issues once he was ensconced in the seat of power.

In December 1999 Wahid levelled a double-barrelled attack on NGOs and the press, declaring that both had become a ‘tool for foreign interests’ (*kepentingan pihak asing*). While a critical press was vital, he said, journalists should avoid ‘gratuitous criticism’. And while NGOs were also expected to be critical, they had become too reliant on foreign aid and had lost their way.⁴⁶ A few months later he levelled an even sharper attack on the NGOs:

What do NGO [activists] know; they live in cities, getting funding from anywhere. They are parasites. They make programs anti this, anti that, so they can get funding. Meanwhile they don’t know anything (‘Presiden: LSM Jangan Jadi Parasit’, *Kompas*, 2 March 2000: 11).

Thus spoke the man whose most loyal following in NU for the previous 15 years had been NGO activists.

In April 2000, Wahid banned the live television broadcasting of a session of the DPR by TVRI, claiming that it might be 'wrongly interpreted' by the public.⁴⁷ This act again flew in the face of Wahid's long and illustrious track record of advocacy of a free media and the right to self-expression. During that particular session, DPR members were scheduled to grill Wahid on his reasons for firing Laksamana Sukardi and Yusuf Kalla from two key economics portfolios, and on his initiative to remove the ban on communism.

To the disappointment and anger of many Indonesian women, Wahid also shifted ground on an issue of great importance in the lead-up to the general and presidential elections, that of the role of women and women's leadership within Islam. Wahid was known for his liberal views on the role of women in Islam, and was frequently invited to speak on this issue at seminars and conferences. For example, in 1993 Wahid had argued at an international seminar not only that women should be allowed to become political leaders, but that they should be permitted to issue *fatwa* on Islamic law, something almost unheard-of in NU circles (Wahid 1993: 129–31). And at a seminar in 1997, he had argued that women should be schooled in *fiqh* so that they could counter more effectively the repressive interpretations of Islamic law prevailing in the NU mainstream (Wahid 1999).⁴⁸

Nevertheless, by 1998 the issue of women's leadership had become a political commodity within NU, and would become so for Wahid as well. In March 1999, while on a trip to Singapore, Wahid made a public statement that created shock waves back home:

The majority of Muslims will not be able to accept Megawati as president because she is a woman. ... We have to build a democratic system. In a democracy, the majority rules. And the majority, I believe, will not accept Megawati ('Gus Dur: Indonesia tak Bisa Dipimpin Wanita', *Republika*, 25 March 1999: 1).

As his courtship of the Poros Tengah proceeded, Wahid took an even more conservative stance on this issue, and began to frame his arguments in Islamic terms. In late June he met with Amien Rais, Nurmahmudi Ismail and Hamzah Haz, respectively the heads of PAN, PK and PPP, to discuss the 'problem' of Megawati, who was by then seen as a leading contender for the presidency. This resulted in a statement that NU and Muhammadiyah 'equally valued Islamic law that forbids women to lead a nation'.⁴⁹ Wahid

issued a press release after the meeting saying that while he personally supported Megawati, he was obliged to defer to the opinion of NU *ulama* interpreting Islamic law as forbidding a woman president. These comments drew a bitter and angry reaction from the women activists who had long been battling NU's conservative approach to women's rights, if expressed privately rather than publicly.

It was perhaps the perception that Wahid was relying on religious authority to bolster his political power — something he had always passionately opposed — that most disappointed his friends and supporters. During the months of delicate courtship between the Poros Tengah and Wahid in mid 1999, Wahid's public statements had taken on a distinctly Islamic tone. Once in power, he disappointed the Poros Tengah parties by not following through on their Islamist agenda, allowing his defenders to argue that his previous stance had been purely strategic. Nevertheless, when his own hold on power was threatened, Wahid not only resorted to undemocratic measures but invoked religious symbolism and teachings to protect his own political position.

As the demonstrations against him increased in frequency in early 2001, Banser and other NU militias threatened bloodshed if the demonstrators did not halt their activities. Many of the militia members were trained in *pesantren* by experts in the martial and mystical arts, and appeared almost fanatic in their devotion to Wahid. Their activities created widespread apprehension, as a report in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* notes:

Many Indonesians ... are already asking about the cost of this effort to save Wahid's skin. They worry that Wahid is leading the country away from the hope of political pluralism and tolerance towards an increasing politicization of Islamic life (Djalal 2001: 64).

One byproduct of this escalating political conflict was a rekindling of the tensions between modernists and traditionalists, to the point of violence. From January 2001 onwards, there were almost constant clashes between supporters and opponents of Wahid around the DPR building in Jakarta. In January, KH Nur Iskandar, a senior NU *kiai* and DPR member, delivered a sermon in which he declared Amien Rais's blood to be *halal* (able to be taken).⁵⁰ Although he was forced to issue an apology for this statement, this did not prevent him from hosting over 400 members of the Ready to Die (Pasukan Berani Mati) militia at his *pesantren* during their 'visit' to Jakarta in April.

In East Java, NU-affiliated militias began to form and train. They saw it as their duty to protect the president from the 'illegitimate' attempt by Amien Rais and his followers to overthrow him. Beginning in February, Wahid's supporters in East Java set fire to several Golkar and Muhammadiyah buildings, as well as slashing and burning trees, over-running regional government buildings and blocking main thoroughfares. Protesters carried signs reading 'Death to Amien Rais', 'Whoever removes Gus Dur must die' and the like.⁵¹ It should be noted that both national and regional NU leaders publicly demanded an end to such violence, and local NU branches denied that their members were involved. Nevertheless, as the violence continued and Wahid's supporters became even more defiantly vocal, it appeared undeniable that at least some of those carrying out the violence were affiliated with elements within NU. As Meitzner (2008: 317) notes, Hasyim Muzadi's offer to compensate some of the victims reinforced that assumption. Especially in East Java, participants in this escalating conflict seem to have viewed it as a continuation of the age-old conflict between NU and the modernist Muslims.⁵²

Far from trying to prevent militant groups from carrying out violence in his name, Wahid issued several veiled threats to use these groups to commit violence. For example, he said that 400,000 of his followers would be coming to a public prayer rally (*istigotsah*) in Jakarta in April 2001 to defend him by any means necessary, even though organizers insisted that the rally was for purely religious purposes (Mapes 2001). In his authorized biography of Wahid, Barton (2002: 351–7) insists that behind the scenes, Wahid and those around him were actively trying to calm the violence. However, he acknowledges that Wahid was not effective in conveying this message to the public, and was consequently perceived by many observers to be tacitly fanning the flames.

In perhaps the most flagrant manipulation of religious authority to bolster Wahid's failing political position, senior NU *ulama* met in early April 2001 to discuss whether or not the attempts to topple the president could be considered *bughot*, a Sunni term referring to a rebellion against a legitimate government. Under Islamic law *bughot* is forbidden, and it is permitted (*halal*) to kill those who carry out *bughot*. The NU *ulama* involved did not issue a public statement after the meeting, and the PBNU attempted to distance itself from the affair. After a period of prevarication during which Wahid seemed to be using the threat of *bughot* to intimidate his enemies, he eventually issued a statement condemning any use of

violence in his support. The issue of *bughot* eventually faded away on its own, but the incident nevertheless served to reinforce the feeling among many observers that the democratic values Wahid supposedly espoused were not readily observable at this point in his presidency.

THE RESPONSE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS

Within NU, it was the pro-civil society activists who had the most concerns about the events surrounding Wahid's rise to the presidency. Masdar Mas'udi, executive director of P3M and a deputy secretary general of the Syuriah, mentioned to me privately the growing concern in NU activist circles about Wahid's actions. He cited as examples Wahid's public statement that he had had to accept the presidential nomination on the 'basis of religion' (a reason the 'old' Wahid would not have used), his public use of anti-Western rhetoric directed at the United States and Australia, and his criticism of UN secretary general Kofi Annan for having an American wife. According to Mas'udi, his fellow activists were also privately expressing doubts about Wahid:

Even though we know he is probably doing this as a strategy, it still makes us wonder if all those years of talking about tolerance and pluralism were also a strategy to gain power. We are afraid of that. We don't want to believe it. We could be very disillusioned.⁵³

Almost immediately after the president's inauguration, activist leaders in youth organizations such as PMII and KOPRI began to send representatives to the provinces to tell members that Wahid's election should not be viewed as an opportunity for aggrandizement in New Order style, but rather as a 'burden' and 'responsibility' for NU, which needed to show that it was able to maintain a clean and democratic form of government.⁵⁴ Organizations like Lakpesdam, LKiS and P3M for the most part attempted to continue conducting seminars and training activities as before, although they found they had to tone down their anti-political rhetoric and critical stance towards the state in order to continue working among NU's grassroots members, who were fiercely supportive of Wahid's presidency. Other groups clearly did allow the relationship with Wahid to influence their actions; I have already mentioned Banser's occupation of the *Jawa Pos* offices and ELSAD's qualified support for this. In general, though, while many activists retained their affection for Wahid, they did

not go out of their way to support his presidency. As late as 5 September 1999, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla wrote in a column for *Tempo*:

I would prefer Gus Dur to 'resign' or withdraw from the political party arena, and return to being a '*kiai*' who can stand independently of any group. ... Gus Dur should ... return to being a 'father figure' for the nation, and not busy himself with political trivialities (Abshar-Abdalla 1999b: 31).

This attitude appeared to change with the efforts of Amien Rais, Golkar leaders and several PPP and PDI-P parliamentarians to oust Wahid in the early months of 2001. Although NU activists would still admit criticisms of Wahid's presidency in private, in public they began to defend him more vigorously, especially against the heated criticisms of modernist groups. Interestingly, while Amien Rais was a leading opposition figure at the time, he was hardly the only, or even the primary, voice speaking out against Wahid. Nevertheless NU reaction seemed to focus very much on the person of Amien Rais, and on what he represented — a more general modernist opposition to Wahid.

NU activists justified their response in terms of the need to protect the Constitution, and from an objection to the way in which certain DPR members were trying to make political mileage out of the situation. Underlying this, however, was fury at what they perceived to be modernist sentiments that 'NU is incapable of running the country' and 'NU members are just provincial (*sarongan*), uneducated people — no wonder they make a mess of things'.⁵⁵ These comments so closely echoed those made by the modernists in Masyumi in the 1950s that, in the minds of many NU activists, history seemed to be repeating itself. Despite the intervening decades, the trauma and scars of the Masyumi conflict, combined with intense bitterness at the sidelining of NU and the preferential treatment accorded modernist groups like Muhammadiyah during the New Order, remained fresh. This was evident in the language some NU activists used to express their anger at the political humiliation of Wahid, and by extension NU:

The frustrating thing is that Gus Dur's problems are being related to NU. Whatever NU does now is criticized. ... It reminds us of the 1950s and our conflict with Masyumi. At that time they said, 'NU people are traditional, they come from the village, they are uneducated. Leave the running of the nation to us, the educated ones', ... Now, if we look at this current conflict, we can see that it is dominated by Masyumi figures. From that we assume that the main purpose of the anti-Gus Dur campaign is character assassination,

primarily linked to Gus Dur's role as a promoter of democracy. ... Basically, it goes like this: Masyumi doesn't want Gus Dur to establish a democratic foundation in Indonesia, because if he succeeds, the existence and future of Masyumi is doomed (Hanif Dhakiri, senior ISIS activist, personal email to author quoted with permission, 22 February 2001).

By referring to their political opponents as 'Masyumi' — a party that had officially disappeared in 1960 — the most 'progressive' and 'enlightened' elements of NU revealed that the conflict was about much more than a contemporary jostling for power between NU and the modernist Muslim political parties. In their minds at least, history was being repeated, and the ancient cleavages between modernists and traditionalists were still very real.

Despite their best efforts, even the most progressive of NU's civil society activists found it difficult to stay aloof from politics and work with their modernist colleagues as the Wahid presidency spun out of control. In early 2001, a group of Muslim intellectuals from both NU and Muhammadiyah set up an email discussion list to promote rigorous and honest discussion of how 'progressive, liberal' ideals, by which they meant pluralism, human rights, religious tolerance and so on, interacted with Islam. The moderator and one of the original founders of the list was Luthfi Assyaukanie, an intellectual from Paramadina, a neo-modernist NGO and university founded in 1986 by Nurcholish Madjid. Other original participants spanned the traditionalist-modernist divide; they included members of Lakpesdam, LKiS and ISIS as well as Paramadina, students and staff of the country's State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) and, owing to the international reach of the internet, Indonesian postgraduate students at American and Australian universities.

In late March 2001, this group established the Liberal Islam Network (JIL) to promote its liberal Islam (*Islam liberal*) ideals. It launched its official website (www.islamlib.com) in April with Assyaukanie as webmaster, and soon after began a weekly talkshow on news radio station 68H that was also broadcast by ten affiliated radio stations. In June 2001, JIL began publishing a weekly column in *Jawa Pos* and 51 affiliated newspapers.⁵⁶ According to its website, JIL was formed in response to the growing 'extremism' and 'fundamentalism' of Islam in Indonesia, as evidenced by the mushrooming of militant groups waging violent jihad. To check the growth of this militancy and promote a more 'pluralistic' and 'inclusive' expression of Islam, JIL aimed to:

(1) strengthen democratic foundations by fostering the values of pluralism, inclusivism and humanity; (2) build a religious life based on respect for difference; (3) support and spread an understanding of religion (primarily Islam) that is pluralistic, open and humanistic; and (4) prevent militant and violent approaches to religion from dominating the public discourse.⁵⁷

NU intellectuals were actively involved in the early stages of the *Islam liberal* movement; after all, the themes of pluralism, tolerance and inclusion had formed the backbone of NU activism for years. Ulil Abshar-Abdalla and Zuhairi Misrawi, both then Lakpesdam activists, as well as Jadul Maula and Achmad Fikrih of LKiS, were early contributors to the JIL discussion list. It did not take long, however, for the age-old traditionalist-modernist divide to emerge. By the spring of 2001, Wahid's presidency was failing and his critics were accusing him of authoritarian, undemocratic conduct. On the list, discussion took place about the dissonance between Wahid's pro-liberal writings and activism and his behaviour once installed in a position of political power. This led to commentary about the inherently anti-democratic nature of the position of the *kiai* in *pesantren* culture, and to criticisms of NU's activists for not preventing the perceived abuses of power by leading NU officials and Wahid himself.

Many NU activists and intellectuals took exception to this, feeling that it was unfair to ask them to take responsibility for the behaviour of other parts of NU. The following comments by Achmad Fikrih reflect the sentiments of many of the NU participants on the JIL discussion list at this time:

I have observed that a bias emerges in each debate. Specifically, there is a tendency for several individuals on this list to put the debate in a 'political' context ... for example, when the political manoeuvres in East Java were interpreted by some as the 'failure' of transformation.⁵⁸ I tend to see it differently, in that transformation can't be measured by the results we obtain ... rather, the measure should be consistency. How consistent, for example, are the transformation activists in their respective areas in maintaining their neutrality and objectivity ... (Achmad Fikrih, personal email to author quoted with permission, 21 April 2001).

It was not only issues of contemporary Indonesian politics that were divisive; familiar differences on religious matters also emerged. The following email to the author from LKiS executive director Jadul Maula resonates with a pain and bitterness that is almost reminiscent of the Masyumi era:

I did indeed participate early on in the JIL list, in the hope, as you say, that we could merge the progressive thought of both modernist and traditionalist circles. However, it seems that there is a different 'paradigm' being used, because several themes that I have put forward, such as animism and atheism within the Islamic tradition, seem to be 'unthinkable' in their [non-NU] circles. ... In addition to that, I feel that there is something 'political' there, which constantly excludes the young and grassroots-oriented NU members. As a result we feel uncomfortable joining in. They judge the masses who cut down trees in East Java, but they don't realize that their claims about NU's civil society are actually more brutal and similarly 'cut' our throats (Jadul Maula, personal email to author quoted with permission, 21 April 2001).

As the debacle of Wahid's presidency continued, then finally ended in a welcome but anticlimactic absence of grassroots protest, NU activists grew increasingly alienated from the *Islam liberal* discourse. After Wahid stepped down and it was safe for NU activists to go back to their preferred struggle against political Islam, many did not return to active participation in JIL. That said, notable exceptions included Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, who continued to lead the organization until 2005, and who remains actively involved in its leadership to the present day.

As the case of JIL illustrates, the Wahid presidency, and the complex historical relationships it evoked, brought the modernist-traditionalist conflict to the surface in many contexts, including — or perhaps even especially — within the NU civil society movement.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has detailed some of the responses to Wahid's presidency from various elements within NU; in particular, it has examined the changes that took place in relation to NU's civil society discourse and the Khittah '26 movement. Predictably, these responses varied and were sometimes inconsistent with each other. Nevertheless, it can be seen that almost immediately, there were perceptible changes in the way NU positioned itself *vis à vis* the state. The implications of Wahid becoming head of state for the Khittah '26 discourse were so radical that NU leaders simply took it off the agenda — most notably, a Muktamar with NU's *Khittah* as its official theme did not even discuss the subject.

During this period, NU displayed over and over again its incredible ability to 'have its cake and eat it too': women were not included in the

organizational structure of NU, but women's groups were encouraged to participate in policy making; Islam was made the basis of the organization, but NU's social activities were to be based on Pancasila; PKB was not an 'official' NU party, but its 'special relationship' to NU was noted 'officially'. NU's civil society activists continued to advocate against political Islam but shifted their focus from the state to militant groups. Wahid's rise to the presidency on the wings of a modernist coalition notwithstanding, the age old modernist-traditionalist conflict was still clearly at play.

Notes

1. The titles were: (1) 'Gender-related *Fiqh* Prior to the 30th National Congress' (Baturaden, 16–17 July 1999); (2) 'NU after the 1999 Elections: Organizational Perspectives' (Jakarta, 31 July – 1 August 1999); (3) 'Strategic Planning Seminar' (Lembang, 6–9 August 1999); (4) 'Islam and Democracy' (Malang, 14–15 August 1999); (5) 'The Economy and the Public' (Surabaya, 21–22 August 1999); (6) 'Traditionalist Approaches to Cultural Issues' (Semarang, 27–28 August 1999); and (7) 'Empowering Civil Society' (Yogyakarta, 4–5 September 1999).
2. Mufid Busyairi, personal interview, 4 November 1999.
3. Rozy Munir, personal interview, 10 November 1999.
4. Arifin Junaidi, personal interview, 23 November 1999.
5. I was kindly invited by Rozy Munir to be a member of the Public Relations Committee, assisting with media relations and arranging speakers for the public forums held daily. This experience allowed me to gain an internal perspective on the process and dynamics of the congress.
6. I and my fellow committee members, Siane Indriani and Fadhiilatul 'Ilmiah, were graciously allowed to share floor space in the room of the *pesantren* occupied by the Central Java branch of Fatayat NU.
7. The official delegates (*utusan*) at the congress were the heads of NU's provincial and district branches. The rules of order stated that decisions would be made by consensus (*musyawarah*) where possible, and otherwise by a vote. Each provincial and district participant had one vote, with the PBNU determining the number of participants from each province (PBNU 1999b: 1–13). It should be noted that with 320 districts but only 27 provinces, decision-making power lay with the district-level participants.
8. Thus, KH Nahrowi A. Salam was replaced by KH Masyhuri Syahid, KH Ma'ruf Amin by Chatibul Umam, KH Mukeri Gawith by KH Irfan Zidny, and KH Dawam Anwar by KH Said Aqil Siradj. These four members of the Syuriah all then took up positions on PKB's Advisory Council.
9. The near rubber-stamping of the report was in sharp contrast to the situation at the 1979 Mukhtar, where delegates described as militant and hostile towards

the PBNU took four days to approve the accountability report (see Nakamura 1996: 68–93). The difference may be attributed to many factors; certainly NU was in a very different position *vis-à-vis* the state in 1979. I submit, however, that one important factor may have been Wahid's strong (some would say autocratic) leadership style. When coupled with his sterling success at raising NU to the peak of its political power in Indonesia, this may have served to inhibit criticism of the PBNU.

10. The five committees were the Organization Committee, Programs Committee, Recommendations Committee, Religious Issues (Technical) Committee and Religious Issues (Principles) Committee.
11. See Barton and Feillard (1999) for a detailed discussion of this decision.
12. A press release issued by the coordinators at the close of the seminar explicitly confirmed this assumption.
13. From a summary issued by seminar coordinators, Baturaden, 17 July 1999.
14. From a transcript of Wahid's speech at the Baturaden seminar.
15. Press conferences and public seminars were held daily at a large media tent on the grounds. Various groups made active use of this forum to promote their agendas, and the major candidates for positions on the PBNU used it to garner public support.
16. Many of the Fatayat NU members I spoke to attributed Ermalena's failure to take a firm stand on this issue to her desire to avoid rocking the boat before her own bid for the top leadership position in Fatayat NU the following year.
17. 'Ketua Muslimat NU Minta Kader Wanita di Sertakan dalam Tanfidziyah', *Republika*, 24 November 1999: 2.
18. Luluk Nur Hamidah, personal interview, 22 November 1999.
19. Mufid Busyairi, personal interview, 22 November 1999.
20. Comprising senior *ulama*, the Religious Issues (Technical) Committee has the authority to issue *fatwa*-like decisions based on the scriptures.
21. My presence as the only woman in the room did not inhibit jokes along the lines of 'If they want to be on top, let them; we get more aroused that way' and 'They say they are being oppressed (*ditekan*), but it's precisely that pressure that makes it enjoyable (*justru tekanan yang enak*)'.
22. According to Masdar Mas'udi, the deputy secretary general of the Syuriah, the decisions of both the Religious Issues (Technical) Committee and the Religious Issues (Principles) Committee were not included in the official results of the Muktamar because they had been 'lost' (Masdar Mas'udi, personal interview, 29 May 2002). Although the general nonchalance over what would appear to be a significant loss might mask a deliberate effort to eliminate documentation of the important decisions made by these committees, it more likely reflects merely the lack of administrative and organizational skills that pervades NU.
23. NU's non-Javanese branches and leaders have consistently accused the PBNU

- of being Java-centric, and of ignoring the problems and needs of members on other islands. These tensions were heightened by the problems of national disintegration facing Indonesia at the time, and had been given unprecedented attention by the PBNU for that reason.
24. The *kiai* who gathered to make this decision were Sahal Mafudz, Ma'ruf Amin, Cholil Bisri, Yusuf Muhammad, Mustofa Bisri, Imron Hamzah, Ilyas Ruchiyat, Abdullah Faqih and Idris Marzuki. For a media report of this incident, see 'Jika Anak Muda "Melawan" Kiai', *Panji Masyarakat*, 8 December 1999: 92–3.
 25. The *formateur* at the Lirboyo Mukhtar were Drs. H. Husen Habibu, Abdul Qodir Umasuqi, Drs. H. Hasan Mansur Nasution and KH Mujtaba Ismail MA.
 26. Many in the NU activist community had hoped that Mustofa Bisri (or Gus Mus, as he is commonly known) would make a serious bid to become chair, because of his progressive 'cultural NU' values. However, he insisted that he did not like politics and was not good at administration, and so lacked the skills NU needed at this time ('Hasyim dan Said Siap, Gus Mus Menolak', *Kompas*, 25 November 1999: 6; 'Dipaksa-paksa, Gus Mus Tetap Dingin', *Radar Kediri*, 25 November 1999: 1).
 27. 'Irfan Zidny: Gus Dur Dukung Hasyim', *Kompas*, 20 November 1999: 7.
 28. Prepared for defeat, Salahuddin Wahid's camp had been busily making deals with other candidates throughout the congress. On 25 November, Said Budairy, a senior Salahuddin advisor, told me that an agreement had been worked out among Achmad Bagdja, Said Aqil Siradj and Salahuddin Wahid that whoever came out on top after the first round of voting would be given all of the votes from the other two camps, in order to foil Hasyim Muzadi. On the same day I spoke to Slamet Effendy Yusuf, another Salahuddin advisor, who said he had just made a separate deal with Hasyim to throw votes his way in exchange for positions in the PBNU 'cabinet'. It seems that the Salahuddin camp did decide to go with the frontrunner, and Salahuddin was accordingly given a place in the 'cabinet' (see Appendix 4).
 29. For media accounts of the election process, see 'NU Sulit Lepas Dari Gus Dur', *Republika*, 26 November 1999: 1, and 'Gus Dur Mustasyar, Gus Sholah Masuk PBNU', *Jawa Pos*, 27 November 1999: 1.
 30. 'Kemandirian Ulama Harus Dipertahankan', *Kompas*, 27 November 1999: 1.
 31. Syafiq Hasyim (1999), personal interview, 28 November 1999. For a discussion of the conservative direction of NU as indicated by these Mukhtar decisions, see 'Jika Anak Muda "Melawan" Kiai', *Panji Masyarakat*, 8 December 1999: 92–3.
 32. Throughout the 1990s, NU intellectuals frequently used 'status quo' as a derogatory label for modernist Muslims, as a means of emphasizing their prevalence in the bureaucracy and their close relationship with the New Order

- regime. See, for example, one of Wahid's written criticisms of ICMI (Wahid and Nasrullah 1995).
33. 'Strategi Peran Ganda Kaum Muda NU', *Srakal*, 23 November 1999: 3.
 34. 'Rekomendasikan Cara Kontrol NU di Kekuasaan', *Kompas*, 23 November 1999: 6.
 35. Helmi Ali, senior director of Lakpesdam, personal interview, 23 October 1999.
 36. 'Gus Dur Memaafkan Bagito', *Kompas*, 26 October 1999: 7.
 37. 'Dianggap Lecehkan Presiden, Bagito Minta Maaf', *Republika*, 25 October 1999: 1.
 38. 'Enam Bulan Memerintah, KKN Mulai Menerpa Gus Dur? PKB Gerah, PBNU Bentuk Tim Klarifikasi', *Jawa Pos*, 6 May 2000: 1.
 39. This chronology appeared on a KMNU mailing list (kmnu@yahoo.com) dated 9 May 2000.
 40. For national media accounts of this incident, see 'Pendudukan Banser Berakhir, Jawa Pos Minta Maaf', *Republika*, 8 May 2000: 1; 'Kalangan NU Jatim "Haramkan" Jawa Pos', *Republika*, 13 May 2000: 1; 'Didemo, "Jawa Pos" tak Terbit', *Kompas*, 7 May 2000: 2.
 41. Based on conversations with NU activists at ELSAD, 14 May 2000.
 42. 'Propaganda ELSAD', ELSAD press release, 10 May 2000.
 43. 'IPNU Minta Banser Ditinjau Lagi', *Suara Merdeka*, <<http://www.suaramerdeka.com/harian/0005/17/nas12.htm>>, dated 17 May 2000, accessed 25 March 2002.
 44. 'NU Tidak Akan Minta Maaf Kepada Jawa Pos', <<http://www.satunet.com/artikel/isi00/05/08/14607.html>>, dated 8 May 2000, accessed 25 March 2002.
 45. 'Kebijakan Gus Dur Bukan Tanggung Jawab PBNU', *Kompas*, 24 April 2000: 6.
 46. 'Presiden: Pers telah Menjadi "Permainan" Asing', *Republika*, 14 December 1999: 2.
 47. 'Presiden Larang Siaran Langsung TV dari DPR', *Republika*, 28 April 2000: 1.
 48. It has been suggested that Wahid held far less passionate views on the subject of women's issues than appeared, and that the person driving his public statements was his wife, Sinta Nuriyah. It is certainly fair to say that Wahid often tempered his pro-women arguments with some very conservative statements. For example, during the 1993 seminar mentioned above, he said that while women were equal to men, they should stay home and take care of the children rather than pursue a career, because the moral well-being of their children was at stake.
 49. 'Mereka Bahas "Buah Simpalakama" Mega', *Republika*, 27 June 1999: 1.
 50. 'Soal Ceramah Panas Kiai Noer Iskandar SQ', <<http://www.bangsaku.com>>, dated 22 January 2001, accessed 15 July 2002; 'Akhirnya, Nur Iskandar SQ

- Minta Maaf Kepada Amien', <<http://www.berpolitik.com/article.pl?sid=101/01/31/143203>>, dated 31 January 2001, accessed 12 July 2002.
51. '10 Kota Digoyang Aksi Massa', <<http://www.jawapos.co.id>>, dated 6 February 2001, accessed 10 July 2002; 'Attack on Golkar Offices Continues', *Jakarta Post*, 9 February 2001: 1; 'Indonesian Police Fire Warning Shots on Protest', *AP Reports*, 7 February 2001.
 52. For example, in February 2001 a group of pro-Wahid protesters in Surabaya demanded to speak with the regional PBB representative, a modernist Muslim and member of the Islamist Islamic Education Council of Indonesia (DDII). In a robust debate that ended in the protestors threatening violence, they framed the conflict surrounding the presidency as one between NU and Muhammadiyah, or Sunnis versus Wahhabis. According to them, the PBB representative's membership of DDII was proof that he was a Wahhabi ('Menjurus Pertikaian Sunni dan Wahabi', <<http://www.bangsaku.com>>, dated 6 February 2001, accessed 7 July 2002).
 53. Masdar Mas'udi, personal interview, 6 October 1999.
 54. Luluk Nur Hamidah, chair of KOPRI, personal interview, 23 October 1999.
 55. Such taunts came up over and over again in conversations I had with NU activists around this time, although I have been unable to find printed documentation of comments of this type having been made by modernists in public settings.
 56. For an account of these developments, see 'Perlawanan Islam Liberal', *Gatra*, 1 December 2001: 29–30.
 57. 'Tentang Kami', <<http://www.islamlib.com/redaksi/tentang.html>>, dated 2 June 2001, accessed 13 February 2002.
 58. 'Transformative Islam' is a slogan of the NU NGO activists; see Chapter 3.

6

Conclusion

The fact that Nahdlatul Ulama is the largest mass-based Muslim organization in the world's largest Muslim nation is reason enough to study it. Add to that the fact that NU gave Indonesia its fourth president, that it has a strong and vibrant civil society movement and that it is committed to democracy and pluralism, and you have a fascinating case study of the interplay between the religious and the political in an Islamic society, the interweaving of personal political agendas and institutional rhetoric, and the internal and external rivalries of the two main streams of Islam in contemporary Indonesia.

In this book I have examined the political context in which NU's civil society movement emerged, and I have explored the political and religious motivations that informed the civil society discourse that resulted. My main conclusions are threefold.

- 1 While articulated as distinct by NU thinkers, the religious and the political are deeply intertwined in NU as motivating forces.

- 2 The civil society discourse and movement of the mid to late 1990s was strongly informed by NU's political interests, but eventually took on a life of its own separate from the political exigencies of its architect, Abdurrahman Wahid.
- 3 The modernist–traditionalist conflict remains the central division within Indonesian Islam, and it is this, rather than NU's relationship with the state, that primarily explains NU's public and political behaviour.

In the rest of this chapter, I take up each of these themes in turn. I then briefly discuss developments in the past ten years, to give an indication of the state of NU's civil society activism at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

THE RELIGIOUS AND THE POLITICAL

Somewhat unusually in the Muslim world, NU articulates a clear distinction between its religious and political identities. In this volume I have explored the nature of the 'political' and the 'religious' or 'social' as defined by NU thinkers, and how NU's identity, behaviour and activity changed (or did not change) as NU shifted between one realm and another. As explained in Chapter 2, the rhetoric of Khittah '26 was founded on a dichotomy between the religious and the political, in which NU's origins were retroactively described as being pristine, pure and wholly religious in orientation, unsullied by the dirty and mundane world of politics. The power of Khittah '26 as a trope lay in its ability to evoke a 'memory' of a time when NU occupied the high moral ground of Islam, prior to its descent into the world of politics where its *fiqh*-informed stances exposed it to charges of opportunism and accommodation. Thus, both NU's origins and the Khittah '26 movement were presented in NU literature and rhetoric as making a clear distinction between politics and religion in which NU was supposed to have rejected the political in order to occupy the untainted realm of the religious. My analysis of NU's origins and the Khittah '26 movement lead me to conclude, however, that both were in fact deeply informed by political exigencies and motivations.

But while Khittah '26 certainly has not meant NU's seclusion within a 'purely' religious realm, neither has it meant just the cynical co-optation of NU's religious standing and doctrine for political purposes. Rather, the picture that emerges is of a far more complex, and deeply intertwined,

experience of the political and the religious within NU. As we saw in Chapter 3, Khittah '26 was used to release NU from a politically unfavourable alliance (with PPP), allowing its leaders to simultaneously seek a more politically profitable relationship (with Golkar) *and* lay the groundwork for the development of a vibrant and sometimes oppositional civil society movement.

One of the most important contributions of the Khittah '26 discourse over the years has been to reconstruct the definition of the political. Chapter 3 outlined the attempts by some activists to articulate a notion of politics that was not about seats in parliament and party platforms, but rather about efforts to improve the lives of the citizenry. The 1992 Munas in Lampung marked the success of this process of redefinition, by defining politics as 'the development of values of liberty that are true and democratic, to foster a mature citizenry that understands its rights, responsibilities and obligations to seek the well-being of all' (PBNU 1992: 162). This understanding of the political not only cast politics in a positive light, but provided a legitimate basis for the activities and discourse of the civil society movement that was emerging at the time.

Seen from this perspective, even the ostensibly 'non-political' elements of Khittah '26 — the efforts to bolster the economic well-being of NU members, and to foster a renewal of religious thought and doctrine within NU — take on a political nuance. As discussed in Chapter 3, many of the economic development schemes established after the Khittah '26 decision under Abdurrahman Wahid's leadership quickly petered out. At the same time, there was a shift in the energies and focus of NU's younger generation from a paradigm of *pesantren*-based socio-economic development to one of civil society development. This led NU's young activists to attempt to address issues of income disparity and poverty by attacking their systemic root causes rather than providing topical remedies. By educating villagers about the hegemonic networks of local government officials, military officials and business leaders that were oppressing them, they were able to generate more widespread political participation and efforts by the citizenry to oppose such oppressive structures and systems.

The efforts to achieve a renewal of religious thinking have also had mixed success. As noted in Chapter 3, this element was removed from the final formulation of Khittah '26 at the 1984 Situbondo Mukhtar, and has been sidelined in subsequent analyses and exegeses of the decision. That said, it could be argued that the civil society movement that emerged

from the Khittah '26 decision has made visible strides in that direction. As discussed in Chapter 5, over many years the young activists and intellectuals in LKiS, P3M and Lakpesdam have worked with the *ulama* and *kiai* in the *pesantren* to expand understandings of traditionalist tenets and allow for contextualized interpretations of Islamic texts; to loosen the rigidity of the *kiai*–*santri* relationship; and to foster a better understanding of the Islamic bases of values such as religious tolerance and human rights.

In spite of the relevance of the more nuanced understanding of the political brought about by the Khittah '26 decision, it cannot be denied that Khittah '26 was frequently used as a referent for NU's formal political stances and activities. Chapter 3 details the way in which Abdurrahman Wahid used it in the first years after Situbondo to achieve a rapprochement with the regime. Later, when NU did not receive the rewards he had hoped for, and when his political enemies, the modernist Muslims, began to gain power, Wahid again used Khittah '26 to counter both the state and political Islam. And Chapters 4 and 5 have detailed the ways in which those on both sides of the debate invoked the rhetoric and trope of Khittah '26 to argue for or against a formal relationship between NU and PKB.

NU'S CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENT

While Abdurrahman Wahid used the rhetoric and framework of Khittah '26 to further his own political agenda, he also used it very effectively to provide a platform of institutional support for the then-nascent and now-vibrant civil society movement and discourse within NU's younger generation of intellectuals. Chapters 3 and 5 questioned both the intent and the effect of NU's civil society discourse, asking how deeply the values and principles of civil society had penetrated NU as an organization, and what the effects have been. NU's discourse on civil society has been deeply coloured by notions of organizational autonomy and opposition to the Soeharto regime. It is therefore of interest to ask what happens when the civil society organization itself becomes deeply associated with the government — can a genuine strand of civil society maintain itself?

As the preceding chapters have shown, three elements in particular have remained broadly consistent throughout NU's civil society discourse: an emphasis on autonomy and opposition *vis-à-vis* the state; opposition

to political Islam; and promotion of pluralism and tolerance within Islam. I have argued that all three of these core elements were informed by NU's political interests, and in particular by the political agenda of Abdurrahman Wahid.

My examination of the nature and effectiveness of NU's civil society movement has been informed by the work of Esposito and Voll (1996) and Hefner (2000), as discussed in Chapter 1. Esposito and Voll (1996: 9) use three criteria to assess the relationship between democratization and Islam: (1) the legality or illegality of an Islamic movement; (2) the degree to which the movement opposes or is cooperative towards the regime; and (3) whether the state permits political participation by the movement. Hefner (2000: 36) posits three conditions that must be met for a civil society to emerge: (1) local intellectuals must find from their own experience a 'model of political culture that affirms principles of autonomy, mutual respect, and voluntarism'; (2) these values must be generalized 'beyond their original confines to a broader public sphere'; and (3) these values must be supported by a variety of institutions, including the state.

The emphasis by both Esposito and Voll and Hefner on the state as a cooperative force, rather than a sparring partner, in fostering civil society is relevant in the NU case. While coloured by oppositional rhetoric, NU's civil society discourse emerged as a direct result of the Khittah '26 decision, viewed by many as a political move designed to effect a reconciliation with the state. Moreover, some elements of NU's civil society rhetoric, especially its opposition to political Islam, corresponded nicely at a surface level to New Order policies on Islam. Similarly, with regard to Esposito and Voll's third criterion, one could argue that the New Order regime was so controlling of political participation that NU leaders and activists were able to participate more fully from the margins of the formal political system, once NU had shed its political party status. This freedom to manoeuvre encouraged greater civil society discourse and activism, in turn bringing about increased political participation at the grassroots level.

For the most part, Hefner's conditions for the emergence of a civil society are met in the case of NU. NU does have a political culture of mutual respect and voluntarism. It has been surprisingly successful in articulating the values of pluralism and religious tolerance beyond its own confines 'to a broader public sphere', if judged by the degree to which the general public associates NU with civil society values. In spite of its lapse in critical activism during the Wahid presidency, NU is still regarded

today as one of the primary forces advocating a pluralistic, tolerant and anti-sectarian expression of Islam in Indonesia. With regard to Hefner's third condition, one could argue that it was precisely the fact that the state did *not* support NU's promotion of civil society values that led NU to support the *reformasi* process that toppled Soeharto, bringing about the post-Soeharto development of democratic institutions and values in Indonesia.

NU's track record with regard to the issue of autonomy, considered by Hefner and many others to be a defining element of civil society, is more ambiguous. Certainly during Wahid's presidency NU's autonomy from the state became deeply compromised. While Kadir (1999) and others argue that it has been overplayed in both academic and activist circles, it does appear that autonomy and a critical stance towards the state were pivotal elements of Wahid's understanding of civil society. Factoring the modernist-traditionalist conflict into the analysis allows us to understand his apparent about-face in the late 1990s from virulent critic to docile supporter of the state, and his decision to run for the presidency after leading a movement that had campaigned for 15 years to keep NU out of formal politics. Similarly, I have argued here that the civil society rhetoric produced by many of NU's civil society activists contained a subtext directed at modernist Muslims, and that this again explains why the critical edge of their rhetoric became somewhat dulled during Wahid's presidency. At the same time, I conclude that the commitment of most civil society activists to the promotion of religious tolerance, pluralism and the need to restrain state power was not politically motivated, in spite of the highly political motivations of the movement's founder, Abdurrahman Wahid.

THE MODERNIST-TRADITIONALIST CONFLICT

I originally began this research with the intention of studying NU-state relations, under the assumption that it was this relationship that chiefly informed NU's social, political and even religious activities. However, as I spent time with NU leaders, politicians and activists, and studied more of NU's history, I gradually became convinced that it was in fact the horizontal relationship with modernist Islam, rather than the vertical relationship with the state, that drove NU's public behaviour. It became increasingly apparent to me that even rhetoric and manoeuvres that appeared to be

solely directed at the state were also motivated by the underlying tension between NU and the modernist Muslim groups.

The conflictual relationship between traditionalists and modernists has many layers and components. In Chapter 2, I suggested that NU's own birth was a direct result of the traditionalists' need to protect particular beliefs and religious expressions from the threat posed by Wahhabism in the Middle East. And while the traumatic split from Masyumi in the early 1950s can certainly be explained in terms of a struggle for political power in the form of leadership positions, more fundamentally it involved a sense of injured pride at the modernists' failure to respect and heed the advice of the *ulama*. The bitterness generated by this attitude remains vivid in the memories of even the younger members of NU to this day, informing not only NU's political activities but also the civil society rhetoric it has produced in recent years.

Much of the political manoeuvring and activities of both Abdurrahman Wahid and NU from the end of the New Order period to the end of Wahid's presidency can also be understood in the light of the tension between modernist Muslims and traditionalist Muslims. Wahid's early reluctance to join Amien Rais in the *reformasi* movement, the inability of FKI and MAR to join forces against the Soeharto regime, and Wahid's stated rationale for forming PKB (to keep political Islam from growing) all fit within a framework of conflict that dates back to the early part of the twentieth century. Although many of Wahid's actions could be interpreted as being directed at the state, this volume has demonstrated how Wahid's deployment of the civil society movement he had fostered, and many of the staples of its discourse (especially the focus on autonomy and opposition to political Islam), was in fact intended to bolster NU's position *vis-à-vis* modernist Islam. Thus, the emphasis on autonomy only truly blossomed after the emergence of ICMI, and served to highlight the intimate relationship between the modernists in ICMI and the Soeharto regime. Similarly, the rhetoric opposing sectarianism and the use of Islam for political purposes was really aimed at the more overtly Islamist political agenda of the modernists (and perhaps a few NU Islamists in the PPP leadership), while also serving the useful purpose of keeping NU in Soeharto's good graces.

While the civil society movement did in fact develop a robust discourse aimed at fostering civil society in Indonesia, NU's contemporary activism continued to be informed by the age-old modernist-traditionalist divide. In

the early 2000s, vestiges of the hostility between the two groups inhibited an alliance between progressive traditionalists and progressive modernists in the interests of challenging Islamist developments in Indonesia, despite the sincere commitment of NU activists to the struggle against the manipulation of Islam for anti-democratic purposes.

In light of these conclusions, I believe that the concept of *aliran*, when used in reference to the traditionalist–modernist divide, is still the most relevant analytical tool available to explain Islam and politics in Indonesia — despite the desire of many scholars to move beyond it. As discussed in Chapter 1, this model is based on the premise that Javanese society can be divided into cultural ‘streams’ (*aliran*) stretching vertically from Jakarta down to the village level, cutting across class, socio-economic and educational differences, and marked by primordial loyalties to a particular cultural or ideological affiliation (Geertz 1960; Jay 1963). The political alliances and enmities of the 1950s — themselves rooted in ideological and political divisions that pre-date the Indonesian state — are still projected onto contemporary conflicts by NU intellectuals and activists, as discussed in Chapter 5. The relationships that existed then went far beyond political party ties and alliances; they were informed by a sense of being part of a community, with a shared identity, culture and ethos. Explained even today most effectively by the notion of *aliran*, such relationships still inform the political thought and actions of NU leaders.

THE SITUATION TEN YEARS ON

In the late 1990s, young NU activists and intellectuals were at the forefront of a wave of reform sweeping through both NU and Indonesian society more generally. Their articulations of civil society, pluralism, political participation, democratic values and a renewal of Islamic thought helped prepare the way for the political developments that followed. The fall of Soeharto, the brief presidency of Habibie and the rise and fall of Abdurrahman Wahid all provided these reformers with challenging terrain in which to put into practice the ideals and ideas they had developed throughout the previous two decades. Shortly after Wahid stepped down, the events of 11 September 2001 threw Islam into the public spotlight throughout the world, and suddenly, the opposition of NU’s civil society movement to political Islam took on a whole new nuance. In Indonesia

as elsewhere, 'liberal' Muslims faced off against 'Islamists', with the modernist-traditionalist divide providing plenty of historical depth to that struggle.

In some cases modernists and traditionalists overcame that history and were able to work together — in monitoring elections, for example, or in speaking out against violence waged under the banner of Islam. In 2005, Paramadina published an excellent compilation of the pro-civil society discourse produced by Muslim intellectuals on both sides of the modernist-traditionalist divide, showcasing the rich intellectual heritage and contribution of Indonesian Islamic thought in support of civil society (Hidayat and Gaus 2005). Modernists and traditionalists in the People's Voter Education Network (JPPR), the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP) and other organizations also collaborated to develop mechanisms to protect democratic systems and values in Indonesia.

For the most part, however, the weight of the history of the modernist-traditionalist divide meant that Muslims on both sides found it easier and more effective to make unilateral, rather than unified, forays against militancy. It is important to note here that the modernist-traditionalist split is not synonymous with a moderate-militant split; that is to say, *both* camps harboured components that were variously for or against an Islamist agenda. However, the overwhelming majority of both modernist and traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia, as represented generally by Muhammadiyah and NU, have consistently rejected a militant agenda and affirmed their support for democratic freedoms in Indonesia. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, these groups prefer to work *within* their respective circles to achieve their ends.

In February 2004, for example, under Hasyim Muzadi, NU hosted the first International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS), aimed among other things at 'fostering respect and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims'.¹ Later that year, in December 2004, Muhammadiyah held a similar international conference on the theme of 'Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation', under Din Syamsuddin. To take another example, in 2001 Indonesia's State Institutes of Islamic Studies (IAIN) — widely considered to be dominated by traditionalists — developed a new civics curriculum for their 26 institutes of higher education in an effort to provide more effective education on democratic institutions, political participation and civic values. Shortly afterwards, the Muhammadiyah university system overhauled its own citizenship (*kewarganegaraan*) curriculum, using

slightly different terminology and taking a slightly different approach, but essentially putting forward the same commitment to democratic values and systems in Indonesia.

Within the NU civil society movement, the last decade has provided proof that the discourse that emerged through the Khittah '26 framework has taken on a life of its own and become a sustainable, intrinsic element of NU activism. Under the leadership of Lilis Husna and Nasihin Hasan, for instance, Lakpesdam continues to promote political participation and basic democracy education at the grassroots level, establishing scores of People's Forums (Forum Warga) as a means for citizens to take part in village government. P3M, with Masdar Mas'udi still at the helm and Zuhairi Misrawi as his protégé, continues to work closely with *kiai* and *ulama* in the *pesantren* to effect concrete social improvements in the communities of NU's religious leaders. And under the leadership of Jadul Maula, Farid Wajidi, Hairus Salim and Achmad Fikrih, LKiS continues to publish books and conduct training programs aimed at embedding civil society values such as human rights, women's rights and religious tolerance in local communities.

This civil society discourse and activism seems to have come into its own in the past ten years, separate from the personal and political agendas of others in NU, and moving beyond the modernist-traditionalist conflict itself. That is, although NU's activists continue to prefer to work within traditionalist circles, by and large their activism no longer contains the pointed subtext aimed at modernist Muslims that it had in earlier years.

This has come about for a number of reasons. First, with the re-emergence of Islamic militancy and even terrorism in Indonesia in the early 2000s, many NU activists realized that fighting militancy was much more important than jousting over rituals or terminology, and that this fight would require them to join forces with moderate Muslim allies from the modernist camp. In that sense, the assertion of some scholars that the primary divide in Indonesian Islam is now between moderate Islam and militant Islam seems to be affirmed. On the other hand, as noted above, it remains the case that this kind of collaboration — the joining of forces of like-minded traditionalist and modernist Muslims against militancy — has not been as prevalent as one might expect. Thus, while NU activists may no longer be aiming their barbs at modernist allies, by and large they are also not self-identifying as part of a broader grouping of 'moderate' Muslims.

The second reason for the decline in modernist–traditionalist rivalry can be traced to the change in the international backdrop and global dynamic since September 11. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, NU intellectuals were driving a renewal of Islamic thought within their traditions. They were producing sophisticated articulations of how the teachings of the *fiqh*, Hadith and Qur'an could be mobilized in support of aspects of their own civil society agenda — religious freedom, women's active participation in society, human rights, minority rights and so on. An example of this was given in Chapter 3, in the work of LKiS to link Islam's Five Essential Principles to universal human rights principles.

As Western governments sought ways to bridge the gaping divide between the 'West' and the 'Islamic world' after September 11, discursive articulations of this type, and indeed the category of 'moderate Muslims' itself, became the target of Western efforts to reach out to moderate Muslims and build alliances with the Muslim world. For reasons too complicated to discuss at length here, this approach backfired, with the result that in the minds of many Muslims, 'moderate Islam' became associated with an effort to co-opt Islam for the purpose of Western domination. It is indicative of the extent of the polarization generated by the 'war on terror' that even in Indonesia, where the vast majority of Muslims agree with basic principles of human rights, women's rights and religious freedom, the proponents of moderate Islam were criticized as 'handmaidens of the West' and lost much of their legitimacy. It is both ironic and unfortunate that in Indonesia, where the civil society discourse was indigenous and pre-dated the current dichotomy between 'Western' and 'Islamic' values, Muslims' efforts to reinforce democratic values and systems have been hampered by the repercussions of Western policy itself. In the face of this new global dynamic, many NU intellectuals have set aside their differences with modernist Muslims in order to nurture a spirit of Islamic brotherhood or solidarity (*ukhrawah Islamiyah*) with the rest of the Islamic world.

The third reason for the decline in traditionalist–modernist rivalry is that Indonesia is facing different challenges in the latter half of the first decade of the new century than it was facing in the first half. By mid 2006, public debate on an Islamic state, Islamist political party platforms, sharia and other religious issues was lessening. The incidence of sharia-inspired regional legislation had dropped off sharply, and Islamist parties were winning less than 7 per cent of the direct district and provincial elections that had got under way in 2005.² It seemed that Indonesian Muslims,

and Indonesians generally, were anxious to move beyond the ideological polemic and deal with more concrete problems such as poverty and unemployment.

Although in 2007 Indonesian economic growth surpassed 6 per cent and other macroeconomic indicators were positive, poverty dipped only slightly, and approximately 45 per cent of Indonesia's 100 million people were still living on less than \$2 a day (Ramage 2007). Amply equipped with a history of *pesantren*-based community development experience from the 1970s onward, NU's civil society activists began to focus once again on 'community empowerment', but this time with a governance angle. They started to look more critically at district government budgets, and to develop advocacy programs that would encourage, assist or even pressure local governments to provide higher allocations to items that were a priority for the poor (usually health and education).

In this context, NU activists have not been above the use of a little *Islam politik* themselves. In 2006, for example, YKSSI (a health advocacy NGO comprising leaders of NU and Nahdlatul Wathon³) identified budget irregularities in the provincial budget of West Nusa Tenggara. At a large religious rally (*tabligh akbar*) bringing together 3,000 Muslim leaders, YKSSI raised the issues of corruption, the budget and community needs with the deputy district head at the time, H.M. Izzul Islam. Buckling under the pressure, he immediately signed a memorandum of understanding committing his government to raising the budgetary allocations for health and education.⁴ This kind of activism is not just the province of NU-affiliated NGOs, but is also being conducted within NU itself. For instance, the Jepara chapter of NU has established a Forum of Ulama to Optimize Budget Rights (FUKOHA) to monitor local government budgets and conduct pro-poor advocacy with local government officials. FUKOHA is comprised of the heads of each subdistrict-level chapter of NU within the Jepara region.

As we consider the developments that have taken place over the past ten years, it becomes apparent that in many ways NU's civil society discourse and activism is conforming to one of the early interpretations of Khittah '26: that of being a force for social activism, community empowerment, and social and economic welfare. Some of the political edge of this discourse has become dulled, and some of the old modernist-traditionalist rivalries have been toned down. At the same time, the age-old divide continues to inform intra-Islamic relations, so that NU activists generally prefer to

remain active within their own circles rather than 'join hands with the enemy'. Meanwhile, politicians within NU continue to enjoy the fruits of the special relationship between NU and PKB, and Gus Dur, from his highly influential position as head of the Advisory Council (Majelis Syura) of PKB, continues to run the show. PKB itself, although splintered, fractious and full of internal rivalries, remains one of the largest Islamic parties in the country, and is a serious player on the national stage. As the nation enters the run-up to the 2009 national elections, it would not be surprising to see a more politicized brand of activism reassert itself and, perhaps, the modernist-traditionalist dynamic re-emerge. For as we have seen throughout this volume, with NU, politics is never far from the surface, and history tends to repeat itself.

Notes

1. See <<http://tokohosting.com/icis>>. NU hosted the ICIS secretariat between 2004 and 2006, when a follow-up conference was held. For a complete elaboration of the decisions of the second ICIS conference, see <http://www.nu.or.id/page.php?lang=en&menu=news_view&news_id=339>.
2. I have explored the reasons for this elsewhere (see Bush 2008).
3. Nahdlatul Wathon is a mass-based Muslim organization with similar doctrines to NU. It operates primarily in eastern Indonesia.
4. 'Tablik Akbar, Perjuangkan Anggaran Rakyat Miskin', *Lombok Post*, 21 September 2006; 'NU Lobar, AMPRM dan KuLBS Gelar Tabligh Akbar', *Harian Lombok*, 21 September 2006.

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APPENDIX 1

Autonomous Bodies, Institutes and Committees of NU, 2008

Autonomous Bodies

Indonesian

- 1 Muslimat NU
- 2 Fatayat NU
- 3 Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (GP Ansor)
- 4 Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama (IPNU)
- 5 Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama (IPPNU)
- 6 Lembaga Pencak Silat Pagar Nusa (IPS Pagar Nusa)
- 7 Ikatan Sarjana Nahdlatul Ulama (ISNU)
- 8 Jam'iyatul Qurro wal Huffadz (JQH)
- 9 Jam'iyah Ahli Thariqah Al-Mu'tabarah An Nahdliyah

English

- NU Women's Organization
NU Young Women's Organization
Ansor Youth Group
NU School Boys Organization
NU School Girls Organization
Pagar Nusa Martial Arts Institute
NU Scholars Association
- Qur'an Readers and Reciters Association
NU Sufism Practitioners Organization

Institutes

Indonesian

- 1 Lembaga Dakwah Nahdlatul Ulama (LDNU)
- 2 Lembaga Pendidikan Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (LP Ma'arif NU)
- 3 Lembaga Pelayanan Kesehatan Nahdlatul Ulama (LPKNU)

English

- NU Islamic Preaching Institute
Ma'arif NU Institute of Education
NU Healthcare Institute

4 Lembaga Perekonomian Nahdlatul Ulama (LPNU)	NU Economics Institute
5 Lembaga Pengembangan Pertanian Nahdlatul Ulama (LP2NU)	NU Agricultural Development Institute
6 Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyah (RMI)	Pesantren Institute
7 Lembaga Kemaslahatan Keluarga Nahdlatul Ulama (LKGNU)	NU Family Welfare Institute
8 Lembaga Takmir Masjid Indonesia (LTMI)	Indonesian Mosque Management Institute
9 Sarikat Buruh Muslimin Indonesia (SARBUMUSI)	Indonesian Muslim Trade Union
10 Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (Lakpesdam)	Institute for the Study and Development of Human Resources
11 Lembaga Penyuluhan dan Bantuan Hukum (LPBH)	NU Institute for Legal Training and Aid

Committees

Indonesian

- 1 Lajnah Falakiah (LF-NU)
- 2 Lajnah Ta'lif wan Nasyr (LTN-NU)
- 3 Lajnah Auqaf (LA-NU)
- 4 Lajnah Zakat, Infaq dan Shadaqah (Lazis NU)
- 5 Lajnah Bahtsul Masail (LBM-NU)

English

- Astrology Committee
 Authorship and Publications Committee
 Waqf Committee (land endowments)
 Zakat, Infaq and Shadaqah Committee (taxes and alms)
 Committee for Religious Problem Solving

Source: NU's website, <<http://www.nu.or.id>>.

APPENDIX 2

Membership of the PBNU, 1984–89

MUSTASYAR (ADVISORY COUNCIL)

KH As'ad Syamsul Arifin

KH Ali Ma'shum

KH Masykur

KH Saifuddin Zuhri

KH Machrus Ali

KH Anwar Musaddad

H Munasir

KH Dr. Idham Chalid

H Imron Rosjadi

SYURIAH (SUPREME COUNCIL)

Rais Am (President General)

KH Achmad Siddiq

Wakil Rais Am (Deputy President General)

KH Radli Soleh

Rais (Deputy)

KH Najib Abdulwahab

KH M. Yusuf Hasyim

KH Dr. Tolhah Mansur, SH

KH Ali Yafie

KH Sahal Mahfudz

Katib Am (Secretary General)

KH Chamid Widjaja

Katib (Secretary)

Drs. HA Ghozali Masruri

A'wan (Member)

KH Ali Sibromalisi

KH Mustamid Abbas

KH Tubagus Amin

KH Ahmad Ghozali

H Sullam Syamsun

KH Hasyim Adnan

H Ahmad Fauzi

H Kun Solehuddin

KH Anang Romly

KH Ali Hasan

KH Ilyas Ruchiyat

Habib Syekh Al Jufri

TANFIDZIYAH (ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL)**Ketua (Director)**

Abdurrahman Wahid

Wakil Ketua (Deputy Director)

H Mahbub Djunaidi

Dr. H Fahmi Saifuddin

H Hasyim Latief

H Saitul Mudjab

Drs. HM Syah Manaf

Drs. H Roma Djajaeputra

Sekretaris Jendral (Secretary General)

HM Anwar Nurris

Wakil Sekretaris Jendral (Deputy Secretary General)

Drs. H Anawi Latief

Drs. H Achmad Bagdja

Bendahara (Treasurer)

H Saiful Islam

Wakil Bendahara (Deputy Treasurer)

HM Said Budairy

Anggota Pleno (Member)

Drs. HM Abduh Paddare

Drs. H Slamet Effendi Yusuf

KH Mudjib Ridwan

KHM Syukron Makmun

H Harun Alrasyid

Drs. Mohammad Ichwan Sam

Drs. Sutanto Martoprasono

Drs. Tosari Widjaja

Drs. HM Zamroni

Mustofa Zuhad Mughni

H Hasan Bari Batubara

Source: PBNU (1984: 175–6).

APPENDIX 3

Membership of the Executive and Advisory Councils of PKB, 1998–99

DEWAN SYURA (ADVISORY COUNCIL)

Ketua (Director)

KH Dr. Ma'ruf Amin

Wakil Ketua (Deputy Director)

KH M. Cholil Bisri

Sekretaris (Secretary)

KH Drs. Dawam Anwar

Anggota (Member)

Brigjen TNI (ret.) Sullam Syamsun

KH M. Hasyim Latief

Dr. KH Nahrowi A. Salam

KH M. Mukeri Gawith

KH Yusuf Muhammad

KH Dimiyati Rais

Hj. Sariani Thaha Ma'ruf

KH Tuan Guru Muhammad Turmudzi Badruddin

KH Ayip Usman

DEWAN TANFIDZ (EXECUTIVE COUNCIL)

Ketua Umum (Chair)

H Matori Abdul

Ketua (Deputy Chair)

Dr. H Alwi Shihab

Dra. Hj. Umroh M.T. Mansoer

H Agus Suflihat Mahmud

KH Imam Buchari Chalil

H Taufiqurrahman Saleh

H Yafie Thahir

Dra. Hj. Khofifah Indar Parawansa

Sekretaris Jendral (Secretary General)

A. Muhaimin Iskandar

Wakil Sekretaris Jendral (Deputy Secretary General)

Drs. Amin Said Husni

H Aris Azhari Siagian

Yahya C. Staquf

Bendahara (Treasurer)

H Imam Churmain

Wakil Bendahara (Deputy Treasurer)

H Ali Mubarrak

H Syafrin Roma

Source: PKB (1998).

APPENDIX 4

Membership of the PBNU, 1999–2004

MUSTASYAR (ADVISORY COUNCIL)

KH Muhammad Ilyas Ruchiyat
KH Abdullah Faqih
KH Abdurrahman Wahid
KH Abdullah Abbas
KH Tuan Guru Muhammad Turmudzi Badruddin
KH Haderani
KH Muhammad Sanusi Baco
KH Syekh Muchtar Muda Nasution
KH Achmad Idris Marzuki

SYURIAH (SUPREME COUNCIL)

Rais Am (President General)

KH M.A. Sahal Mahfudz

Wakil Rais Am (Deputy President General)

KH Endin Fachruddin Masthuro

Rais (Deputy)

KH Ahmad Mustofa Bisri
KH Abdul Muchid Muzadi
KH Muhammad Imron Hamzah
Prof. Dr KH Said Aqil Siradj
KH Muhammad Irfan Zidny
Prof. Dr. KH Chatibul Umam
KH Muhammad Anis Fuad Hasjim
Drs. KH A. Hafidz Utsman
KH Muhammad Abdillah Al-Djufri
KH Tuan Guru Nuruddin Husni Karra

Katib Am (Secretary General)

Prof. Dr. KH Said Aqil Munawar

Wakil Katib Am (Deputy Secretary General)

Drs. H Masdar Faris Mas'udi

DR KH Manarul Hidayat

H Muhammad Fachri Thaha Ma'ruf

A'wan (Member)

KH Habib Hamid bin Alwi Alatas

KH Habib Luthfy bin Yahya

KH Habib Dr. Abd. Kadir Al Habsy

KH Prof. Dr. Abd. Moeiz Kabry

Dr. Mansur Nasution

KH Habib Abdullah Assegaff

KH Abd. Rahman Chudlori

KH Ahmad Warsun Munawir

M. Syukri Unus

Drs. Abd. Fattah Bhozali

KH Arifin Khan

KH Ibnu Ubaidillah Syathari

Drs. Abd. Warist Ilyas

Drs. Chasbullah Badawi

KH Ubaidillah Isa

KH Dimyati Rais

KH Otong Nawawi

KH Luthfy Hakim

Drs. Abd. Rochim Hasan

Prof. Dr. Hj. Chuzaimah T. Yango

Dra. Hj. Mursyidah Thohir

TANFIDZIYAH (ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL)**Ketua Umum (Chair)**

H Achmad Hasyim Muzadi

Ketua (Deputy Chair)

Ir. H Kemas Madani Idrus
Drs. KH Abdul Wahid Zaini
HM Rozy Munir
Ir. H Mustofa Zuhad Mughni
Prof. H Cecep Syarifuddin
H M. Fajrul Falaakh
H Achmad Bagdja
Ir. H Salahuddin Wahid
H Mohammad Rusli
Prof. Dr. H Achmad Riva'y Siregar
Drs. H Andi Jamaro

Sekretaris Jendral (Secretary General)

H Muhyiddin Arubusman

Wakil Sekretaris Jendral (Deputy Secretary General)

Drs. H Abdul Aziz
Drs. H Masduki Baidhowi
Drs. H Hilmy Muhammadiyah
Drs. H Taufiq R. Abdullah

Bendahara (Treasurer)

H Abdullah Machrus

Wakil Bendahara (Deputy Treasurer)

Drs. Ronin Hidayat
H Fauziannoor
H Masnuh

Source: PBNU (1999b: 185–87).

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"This is the most comprehensive account of the internal dynamics of the young intellectual generation of NU advocating for pluralism and democracy within Islam in Indonesia, during Gus Dur's leadership of PBNU. Because of the author's unique vantage point, her sometimes sharp criticism of this movement and its internal dynamics is extremely useful to those who continue to advocate for reform, within NU and in Indonesia generally."

Ahmad Suaedy

Executive Director, Wahid Institute, Jakarta

"Robin Bush provides an authoritative, insightful and engaging account of the political and intellectual world of Nahdlatul Ulama. She carefully analyses the tumultuous and often tangled dynamics within NU from the 1980s to the post-Soeharto period and unearths deeper historical and cultural resonances in explaining the organisation's outlook and actions. This is a valuable work for anyone seeking to understand contemporary Islamic politics in Indonesia."

Greg Fealy

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